

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

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It's a sad testimony of today's society that the political and banking elite seem to feel that they alone know what is best for the world, leaving the general public to submissively follow their dictates, even if that leads to disastrous decisions and a dramatic decline in living standards.

When one man stood up for what was right for his country and let the people decide on a major issue, he unleashed a torrent of criticism from that international elite and the media they control. However, he was proven both ethically and legally correct in the court case that ensued.

That man was the President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and the event was the collapse of one of its private banks in the Icesave debacle in 2008. Instead of bowing to the international financial powers that brought down Greece, for example, the President of Iceland led the defence of his country, twice vetoing a decision by the politicians to cave in to the pressure and putting the issue to a referendum in which the country supported him and democracy won.

It was ironic that the country with the world's longest running parliament should be the one to stand up for democracy to bring power back to the people.

Building on his belief that the people had an important part to play in deciding the world's future, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson announced the founding of Arctic Circle in Spring 2013.

Icelandic Times has an in-depth interview and review of the man who served his country as President for 20 years and who continues to further the cause of both his country and democracy with the Arctic Circle Assembly and Forums, paving the way for a new model of international collaboration while also expanding the role of the Presidency in new ways.

Einar Th. Thorsteinsson
 Managing Editor and Publisher



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Credits

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Icelandic language

Icelandic is one of the European root languages, like Latin. There is no 'c' or 'z' in modern Icelandic, except in foreign words. However, it still contains some letters not found in most other languages. This basic list provides a general idea of their sounds, using familiar words rather than phonetics.

Character	Pronunciation
á	Like 'ow' in 'cow'
æ	Like the personal pronoun 'I'
ð	Like 'th' in 'that'
þ	Like 'th' in 'thing'

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Icelandic Times
 Síðumúla 1 • 108 Reykjavík
 +354 578 5800
 info@icelandictimes.com
 www.icelandictimes.com



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THE GREATER
Reykjavík AREA

One of the world's smaller capitals, Reykjavik is surrounded by the towns of Seltjarnarnes, Kópavogur, Garðabær, Álftanes (where the President lives), Hafnarfjörður and the country town of Mosfellsbær, combining to make up the Greater Reykjavik area. It is also one of Europe's youngest capitals. Founded by the first permanent Viking settler in the 900s, Ingólfur Arnarson, it has grown from a handful of houses a few centuries ago to a compact and thriving metropolis. The National Museum holds the history of the nation, while the National Library, just opposite it, has the nation's books and records. There are many art galleries and museums throughout the area

and the new concert hall complex by Reykjavik's harbour, Harpa, has a full programme each month. Innovation and inspiration play a major role in the city's life. From here, visitors can reach the whole country. The countryside is always very close by. Activities such as tours, whale- or bird-watching, fishing, swimming, hiking, biking and horseriding are very popular. There's even ice skating. On weekends especially, the city is filled with nightlife that continues till morning. There are plenty of pubs and restaurants with both genuine Icelandic food and international cuisines. So you never need to go hungry. From youth hostel to guesthouses and hotels, there's accommodation for every budget.



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POWER TO THE PEOPLE

The Democratic Legacy of Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, the Former President of Iceland

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson opened the Arctic Circle Assembly at the Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre on 6th October 2016. This was his first formal appearance since leaving the presidency after serving twenty years in office. The first twelve years of Grímsson's presidency were relatively conventional but in the last eight years—after the financial crisis of October 2008—he blazed new trails and carved out a unique position among the world's leaders.

He challenged the international financial and supranational authorities by putting the controversial Icesave conflict to a national referendum. Instead of bowing to the international financial powers that brought down Greece, for example, the President of Iceland stood tall before the political elite and an imposing army of journalists who criticised the Icesave decision. He led the defence of his country, which stood alone against the outside world but then prevailed both ethically as well as before the courts.

Democracy won.

With the Arctic Circle Assembly, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson has created an international democratic forum on Arctic issues,

previously discussed in dark backrooms during the Cold War. The Arctic is currently under increasing threat due to global warming; the Arctic ice cap is melting with frightening speed. The Arctic Circle Assembly is a forum without precedent where politics, science, think tanks, companies, environmental organisations and indigenous communities meet to shine the spotlight on the Arctic region, which has previously received scant attention. The Arctic Circle Assembly is an innovation in international collaboration. It is a cradle of democratic discourse where silence previously reigned.

In his work as the President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson has put democracy first, bringing the power to the people.

World Leaders at Arctic Circle

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson opened the conference at Harpa as Chairman of the Arctic Circle Assembly, having previously served as its Honorary President. In attendance were approximately 2,000 conference guests from more than fifty countries. The conference marks a turning point, being a forum where politicians and the public meet to deliberate; people who want their voice to be heard on issues of vital importance to the world. In only a few years, Iceland has become the primary destination

for international discourse on the Arctic region; a focal point for democratic debate. The country has thus made a prominent niche for itself internationally.

“It is sometimes forgotten that the Arctic is a big part of our planet. It is approximately the size of Africa when you add it all up, and for centuries, it was completely unknown to the so-called ‘enlightened’ part of the world, the distant home of its indigenous peoples. In the second half of the 20th century, it became one of the most militarised parts of the world. So it wasn't really until the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century that this big part of the planet became open to international cooperation,” says Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, in a conversation with the Icelandic Times.

National Press Club, Washington, April 2013

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson announced the founding of Arctic Circle at the National Press Club in Washington in the spring of 2013. “The Arctic has suffered from a lack of global awareness and, as a result, a lack of effective governance. In the past, the region did not matter to the world's decision-makers and was largely forgotten. Now, with sea-ice levels at their lowest point in



Mr Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson with Hallur Hallsson, tv-editor and historian.



recorded history, the world is waking up to the challenges and opportunities the Arctic presents for its citizens, as well as those who live in lower latitudes,” said Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson in Washington on 15th of April 2013.

Around 1,300 people from thirty countries attended the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik in the autumn of 2013. Speakers included Eric Schmidt, founder of Google; Aleqa Hammond, the Prime Minister of Greenland; and Artur Chiligangarov, Vladimir Putin’s special envoy on the Arctic. A year later, Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland, was the main speaker at the

Arctic Circle Assembly, and in 2015, François Hollande, President of France, came to the conference and gave a keynote speech shortly before the Paris Climate Conference. Attending the conference in Iceland were 2,000 people from more than fifty countries. The presidents travelled to the Jökulsá á Sólheimasandi glacial river, where evidence for climate change can be viewed.

With Arctic Circle, Iceland is, for the first time, the setting for major international collaboration. The country has previously held summit meetings. Ronald Reagan, President of the United States, and Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the

Soviet Union, met in Reykjavík in 1986. Richard Nixon and Georges Pompidou, presidents of the United States and France, met in Iceland in 1973. The most famous chess duel in history took place in Laugardalshöll stadium in 1972 when Bobby Fischer snatched the World Chess Championship from the Soviet Boris Spassky. These were unique events to be sure—but Iceland had never before been the annual destination for one of the largest conferences in the world.

A Shining Example

In October 2016, Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of the Scottish Government, were the main speakers at the conference. “Iceland is a shining example but you can do more”, said Ban Ki-Moon at Harpa and pointed out that, during the summer, Arctic sea ice the size of England had melted. “Ban Ki-Moon has a clear view of the future and has shown much statesmanship and courage”, said Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson. Arctic Circle has certainly become an effective forum for democratic discourse where the world’s leaders make themselves heard.

In 1996, the Arctic Council was established by the governments of eight nations: the United States, Russia, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark on behalf of Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Some people view Arctic Circle as a challenge or counterbalance to the Arctic Council but Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson says that this is a misunderstanding.

“We see the Arctic Circle Assembly and its forums as an assistance to the governmental work of the Arctic Council. The Arctic Council is a formal intergovernmental body, where only those who are formal representatives have a voice and a seat at the table. That is the way it is in organisations of this kind. But we thought that the future of the Arctic required a meeting hall where everybody could sit at the table, where everybody could participate, be in the orchestra and the choir, and every voice could be heard,” says Ólafur Ragnar. “Arctic Circle is a model for how politicians and the public can sit around a table together. Democracy has been given a new forum.”





Mr. Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson with first lady Dorrit Moussaieff at the presidential inauguration 2012.

Icesave Put to a National Referendum

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson was Chairman of the People's Alliance (Alþýðubandalagið) from 1987 to 1995 and a minister in the government of Steingrímur Hermannsson from 1988 to 1991. He was elected President of Iceland in 1996 and re-elected in 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012. The first twelve years of his presidency were rather traditional but, in the wake of the financial crisis of October 2008, the Icelandic nation was faced with a previously unknown dilemma that threatened its finances and sovereignty. The country was under heavy international pressure to accept the Icesave liabilities of Landsbankinn in Britain and the Netherlands.

The Icelandic government agreed to accept the liabilities of the private bank but Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson twice vetoed the pertinent bill and put the matter to a national referendum and both times the people upheld the President's veto. The nation was condemned by many countries, receiving harsh criticism from the Nordic area, for example. Grímsson defended the country in the face of this international pressure. The matter was referred to the EFTA Court where Iceland won the case brought by Britain, the Netherlands and Brussels.

Can it be said that you have truly changed the office with Arctic Circle and particularly with the controversial issue of Icesave?

"It has been my position not to issue judgement on my time as president. On the

one hand I conducted the presidency in a traditional way, but on the other hand I did things which had not been done before. I exercised the power of the president to refer controversial issues to the people of Iceland. Many criticized me when I did that, but I fundamentally believe that the democratic will of the people should be the decisive voice. I think now, looking back, they realise it was the right decision, that the people of Iceland could be trusted in this way. I think that our democracy will never be the same after the nation experienced that. Before, the so-called leadership, the decision-making elite, claimed that they alone could be trusted to take the right decision. But Icesave showed that the government of the time, the decision-making elite, took the wrong position and the people of Iceland took the right decision."

Active in International Collaboration

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson says that in addition to Arctic Circle, he has taken the presidency in a new direction internationally. In connection with this, climate change and sustainable energy come to mind but also participation in various projects and institutions. "Before, the presidents had made state visits, maybe given speeches or lectures but had not been active players in this wide-ranging international cooperation," he says.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson says that Arctic Circle demonstrates that the President of Iceland can create new instruments for

constructive international cooperation in a way that benefits the country and the international community, and gives the young people of Iceland an opportunity to annually participate in international cooperation, which is very beneficial. "So I hope that all this will show people that although the presidency has formal duties, it can be used in constructive dynamic ways to further cooperation, and thereby give Iceland a stronger voice among nations."

The Icelandic Nation Would Not Be Shackled

Iceland has become a stronger international voice through Arctic Circle; does the same apply to Icesave?

"Yes, absolutely. That is the objective conclusion. The reputation Iceland gained from holding the referendums and trusting the people for these important decisions for this financial crisis, was unique. In most countries it was argued that democracy should not be allowed to interfere with the financial markets. Everybody knows how the people of Greece were not allowed to vote on these issues," says Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson.

He says furthermore that the reputation of Iceland has grown as a result of Arctic Circle; each year, the country is a meeting place for representatives from important nations, including the United States, Russia, Canada, China, Germany, France, Britain, Japan and Korea. This is important recognition that Iceland can serve a special role in the international community.

"Last year at the Assembly there was an interesting proof of this. Matt Brzezinski, the highest official in the White House on the Arctic, expressed in an open session of the Arctic Circle Assembly how cooperation between the United States and Russia in the Arctic had been constructive and positive despite disagreements on Ukraine and other international issues, how important it was that the United States and Russia could continue that constructive dialogue. Without the Arctic Circle Assembly, the evidence of such constructive cooperation between the United States and Russia would not be as clear as it was made by Brzezinski in front of this vast audience of the Arctic Circle Assembly," says Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson.

-HH



KEF Expansion Plans

ISAVIA

INTRODUCES A NEW MASTER PLAN FOR GROWING TOURISM



GUDNI SIGURÐSSON

Iceland is clearly having a moment; tourism is booming and travellers can't get enough of the island's natural wonders. Isavia, which oversees Keflavik International Airport (KEF), reports that 25 airlines are now flying to around 80 destinations during the summer months. As for winter, Isavia's marketing manager, Gunnar K. Sigurðsson says, "We have had a strong focus on winter and year-round routes and have increased the number of year-round airlines from two in 2006 to 12 in 2016".

Increase in flights

The growth has been very fast. "Keeping up with a 260% increase since 2009 is, of course, a challenge for all our personnel but we have hard working and positive staff members working for Isavia and the other companies providing services at the airport," says Gunnar. "It is very difficult to maintain a high level of passenger satisfaction at a time of very rapid growth for many years." However, the Airport Service Quality surveys by the Airports Council International show that the staff at the airport work hard to keep the airport at the very peak level of service, even when under a lot of pressure.

Airport Expansion Plan

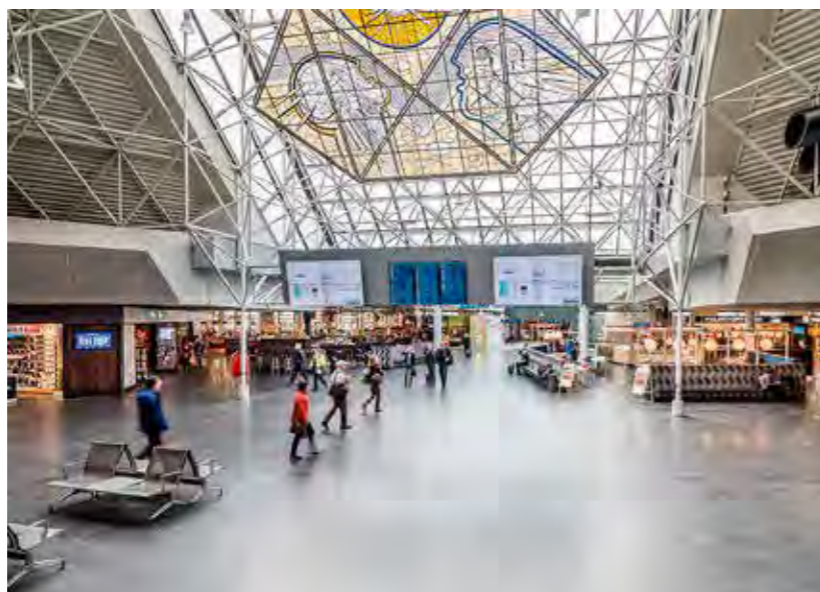
To accommodate the dramatic increase in traffic, Isavia has produced a comprehensive plan. "We have big plans for expanding the airport," says Gunnar. "We have introduced a very ambitious new Master Plan which is our main road map until 2040."

Isavia is developing the plan today in three ways. First, they are currently working on an overhaul of the airfield in which they are resurfacing both the main runways, constructing rapid exit taxiways and adding hardstands.

In 2017 Isavia will finalise a 70 million euro enlargement of the main terminal. In addition to these current projects, which are in line with the Master Plan, the company has started preparations for the construction of the expansion of the terminal to the east and to the north, which will nearly double the airport's capacity when they are completed. "We aim to start construction of the terminal expansions in 2018," says Gunnar.

Technology Upgrades

Isavia closely follows the latest technology developments in the business and they are implementing proven technology that eases passenger flow through the airport and decreases waiting times. "We are employing automation in all parts of the process through the terminal," says Gunnar. "The number of self-check-in kiosks is growing fast, and the use of self baggage-drop gates, automated boarding pass validation gates, and security automation are increasing very rapidly. Next year we will introduce automatic gates for border control and self-boarding." -JG





GETTING TO ICELAND

A growing number of airlines are offering connections to Keflavik International Airport (KEF). Below is information on each airline as well as a link to their website.

Icelandair

Icelandair is the international airline of Iceland, currently operating flights to countries on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean out of its hub at Keflavik International Airport. The airline connects 27 gateways in Europe with 16 gateways in North America, through Iceland as a hub.
<http://www.icelandair.com>

Wow Air

WOW air is an Iceland-based low-fare and high-performance airline that was founded in 2011. WOW serves 30 destinations across Europe and North America and is committed to providing the cheapest flights to and from Iceland.
<http://wowair.com>

Air Greenland

Air Greenland is Greenland's national airline, offering flights to, from and within Greenland. Founded in 1960, its fleet consists of 35 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters—ranging from the large Airbus 330-200 to small AS 350 helicopters. The governments of Greenland and Denmark as well as SAS GROUP jointly own the airline.
<http://www.airgreenland.com>

Air Iceland

Air Iceland, which is a part of the Icelandair Group, provides domestic flights in Iceland and international flights to Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Destinations in Iceland are Keflavik (KEF), Reykjavik (RKV), Akureyri (AEY), Vopnafjörður (VPN), Þórshöfn (Thorshofn) (THO), Ísafjörður (IFJ), Grímsey (GRY) and Egilsstaðir (EGS). Air Iceland also offers day tour packages.
<http://www.airiceland.is>

Airbaltic

Airbaltic connects the Baltic region with 60 destinations in Europe, the Middle East, and CIS countries. The airline, which was established in 1995, has received international awards for excellence and punctuality.
<http://airbaltic.com>

Air Berlin

Air Berlin, which is Germany's second largest airline, operates an extensive network including destinations throughout Europe, North Africa, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and the Americas. The airline concentrates on serving major German and European cities and a total of 23 German cities are served.
<http://www.airberlin.com>



Austrian 

Austrian Airlines is the Austrian flag carrier, headquartered in Vienna. The airline operates flights to more than 130 destinations. Its hub is Vienna International Airport, and it's a member of the Star Alliance. <http://www.austrian.com>

British Airways 

British Airways is the United Kingdom's flag carrier and its largest airline, based on fleet size. The airline is based in Waterside near its main hub at London Heathrow Airport. British Airways serves more than 160 destinations, including six domestic destinations. It is one of the few airlines to fly to all six permanently inhabited continents. www.britishairways.com

Czech Airlines 

Czech Airlines is the national airline of the Czech Republic, based at Václav Havel Airport Prague in Ruzyně, Prague. The airline currently flies to more than 80 destinations in 45 countries including European cities like Amsterdam, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Madrid, Milan, Paris, London and Rome. www.czechairlines.com

Delta 

US Delta airline operates an extensive domestic and international network serving all continents except Antarctica. Delta and its subsidiaries operate more than 4,000 flights every day and it's the oldest airline still operating in the United States and is the world's largest airline in terms of fleet size. <http://www.delta.com>

EasyJet 

British airline EasyJet carries more passengers than any other United Kingdom-based airline, operating domestic and international scheduled flights between 118 European, North African, and West Asian airports. The airline has 19 bases across Europe, the most important being at Gatwick. It is the second-largest low-cost carrier in Europe, after Ryanair. <http://www.easyjet.com>

Edelweiss Air 

Edelweiss Air is a Swiss airline owned by Swiss International Air Lines and the Lufthansa Group. From its base at Zurich Airport, it operates flights to European and intercontinental destinations. Founded in 1995, Edelweiss flies to more than 50 destinations. www.flyedelweiss.com

Evelop evelop!

Evelop Airlines, branded as evelop!, is a Spanish airline based at Palma de Mallorca Airport. The airline operates flights out of Spain on behalf of tour operators. It is owned by Barceló Viajes and is a subsidiary of Orbest, an airline bought by the Barceló Group in 2013. www.evelop.com

Germania 

Germania is a privately owned German airline with its headquarters in Berlin. The airline operates flights to destinations in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East from several German airports. It carries more than 2.5 million passengers a year. www.flygermania.com

Germanwings 

Germanwings is a budget airline based in Germany that is owned by Lufthansa. The main German airports offering flights are: Cologne Bonn Airport, Stuttgart Airport and Berlin-Schönefeld Airport. Germanwings flies to more than 85 destinations. <http://www.germanwings.com>

Iberia Express 

Iberia Express is a Spanish budget airline owned by Iberia, which operates flights from its parent airline's Madrid hub. The airline began operating in 2012 and flies to European destinations including Iceland, France, Denmark, Italy, Norway, and others. www.iberiaexpress.com

Lufthansa 

Lufthansa is the flag carrier of Germany and the largest airline in Europe in terms of the number of passengers carried. The airline operates flights to 18 domestic destinations and more than 200 international destinations in 78 countries across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. With more than 700 aircraft, Lufthansa has the second-largest passenger airline fleet in the world. <http://www.lufthansa.com>

Luxair 

Luxair is the flag carrier airline of Luxembourg with its headquarters and home base at Luxembourg Findel Airport in Sandweiler. The airline operates scheduled flights to destinations in Europe, North Africa, the Mediterranean and Middle East with additional charter and seasonal flights. It is Luxembourg's only passenger-carrying airline. www.luxair.lu

Niki 

Niki is an Austrian budget airline and a subsidiary of Air Berlin that is headquartered at Vienna International Airport. The airline operates flights to European cities and holiday destinations including Iceland, Denmark, France, Greece, and Spain, among others. www.flyniki.com

Norwegian 

Norwegian is a budget carrier, and the second-largest airline in Scandinavia. It offers a domestic flight schedule within Scandinavia and to business destinations like London, as well as service to international destinations. The airline has bases at Copenhagen, Oslo-Gardermoen, Stockholm-Arlanda, Helsinki-Vantaa, Bergen, Trondheim, Stavanger and Sandefjord. <http://www.norwegian.com>

Primera Air 

Primera Air is a Danish Airline that has its headquarters in Copenhagen. Originally it was established in Iceland and today offers flights from Scandinavia to more than 70 destinations in Europe, the Mediterranean, Asia, and the Caribbean. In 2009 Primera Air established the subsidiary Primera Air Scandinavia. <http://primeraair.com>

SAS 

Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) is the flag carrier of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and the largest airline in Scandinavia. The air-



line operates flights to more than 90 destinations. The airline's main hub is Copenhagen Airport, which is the main European and intercontinental hub. Somewhat smaller hubs are Oslo Airport, Gardermoen and Stockholm-Arlanda Airport. <http://www.flysas.com>

SunExpress 

SunExpress is a Turkish airline based in Antalya. The airline operates scheduled and chartered passenger flights to various destinations in Europe, Asia and North Africa including Iceland, Germany, Denmark, Belgium, and Morocco, among others. www.sunexpress.com

Transavia 

Transavia.com is a Dutch-based budget airline operating as an independent part of the Air France-KLM group. Its main base is at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol while Rotterdam The Hague Airport (RTM), and Eindhoven Airport (EIN) are its secondary hubs. <http://www.transavia.com>

hoven Airport (EIN) are its secondary hubs. <http://www.transavia.com>

Vueling 

Vueling Airlines is a Spanish airline headquartered in Barcelona and its name is derived from the Spanish word 'Vuelo', which means flight. Vueling flies to more than 100 destinations in Europe, Africa, and Asia and is the second largest airline in Spain. <http://www.vueling.com>

Wizz Air 

Wizz Air is a Hungarian budget airline with based in Budapest. The airline serves many cities across Europe, Israel and the United Arab Emirates. Destinations include Iceland, Denmark, France, Bulgaria, and Norway, among others. It has the largest fleet of any Hungarian airline, although it is not a flag carrier, and the airline currently serves 35 countries. www.wizzair.com

THE ICELANDIC SECRET TO A HEALTHY LIFE

SagaMedica focuses on natural solutions for health

SagaMedica provides quality natural products from Icelandic medicinal herbs, with a special emphasis on angelica, which grows wild in Iceland. Some research claims that Icelandic herbs are more potent than others due to the short growing season in the summer months under the midnight sun. Today, scientific evidence backs up this claim. Research has proven that the Angelica archangelica plant is, in fact, an effective way to treat health problems such as cold symptoms, an overactive bladder, and frequent urination.

Impressive history

Angelica has a long history in Iceland. The plant was considered an asset to the Vikings who first settled in Iceland, as they knew its value full well. The root, stem, seeds and leaves were all used, both as food and medicine. This is documented in an Icelandic medical book over 150 years old.

SagaMedica has been selling natural dietary supplements made from Angelica since the company was founded by academics from the University of Iceland in the year 2000. Dr. Sigmundur Guðbjarnason, a former



dean of the university, was a pioneer in research into Icelandic medicinal herbs and their health benefits. He laid the foundation for SagaMedica, which has grown steadily through the years, and now offers a range of products that improve the lives of consumers. SagaMedica combines 1100 years of history and scientific research with the pristine Icelandic nature to create innovative health products.

Harvested on Hrísey

Angelica grows wild on the island Hrísey, which is situated in the northern Eyjafjörður fjord. The soil is fertile and pure and the air is clean. In fact, Hrísey was awarded an organic

certification due to its clean, positive environment. The herb is picked by hand on the island and every measure is taken to ensure its purity and the protection of the Icelandic nature. The process takes the natural environment into account from harvesting the herbs to the manufacturing of the final products.

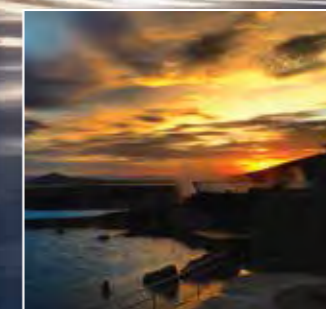
The voice of Iceland

Voxis is a popular SagaMedica product that is produced from the leaves of Angelica. The throat lozenges, which are available in shops in Iceland and in the Duty Free area in Keflavik International Airport, contain antiviral phytochemicals which can help to prevent cold or flu infections. Voxis has been shown to relieve irritating coughs and has a soothing effect on sore throats. The lozenges contain menthol and eucalyptus and have a pleasant, refreshing taste.

SagaMedica's products are available for purchase in Iceland's grocery stores, pharmacies and on the company's website www.sagamedica.com. -JG

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THE FINE ART OF KNIFEMAKING

Bringing an Ancient Viking Tradition Into the Present since 1990

In the town of Mosfellsbær, just a 15 minutes' drive from Reykjavik, master craftsman Páll Kristjánsson (or Palli) and his co-creator Soffía Sigurðardóttir are hard at work in their rustic atelier, where they create an array of handsome knives for collectors, chefs, and all those who appreciate the workmanship that goes into a finely crafted tool.

Icelandic Artisans at Work

Damascus steel, well known for its durability and razor sharp blades, as well as stainless steel from Denmark, Germany and Sweden are choice materials favoured by Palli and Soffía. Many of the blades are Viking Age replicas decorated with finely etched designs that are then expertly paired with a handle carved by Palli. Traditional Icelandic materials are all used to create beautifully carved handles—birch, rowan, horse's hooves, reindeer antler, goat and sheep horn and even fossilised wood. Palli's knives can be found scattered throughout the world in 85 countries and as collector's items, they sometimes enjoy fierce bidding between collectors on the Internet.

The Woman's Touch

For her part, Soffía, who has worked under Palli's tutelage for several years, has created a line of beautiful professional kitchen knives and her own collection of steak knives and forks which are gaining in popularity. Blades for these knives come in various shapes and materials (Japanese, Damascus steel or high carbon steel) and the finely balanced handles make them a joy to use in the kitchen. Chefs, cooking schools and cooking enthusiasts tend to love to show off these one-of-a-kind handmade kitchen tools that have become something of a sought after souvenir from Iceland.

Custom-made

Should you have your own design ideas or materials that you would like to use, Palli

and Soffía are happy to work with you to produce a custom knife made to your specifications. More information can be found at their websites listed below where you can browse their collections and even special order online.

Walk-ins Welcome

Palli and Soffía's workshop can be found at Álafossvegur 29, 270 Mosfellsbær. Opening hours are 9–6, Monday through Friday, from 9–4 on Saturdays or if you are in the neighbourhood outside of those hours, you are always welcome to pop in for a chat.

Though a visit to their workshop would be well worth your time, you can also find their products available in Brynja hardware store on Laugavegur 29 in the centre of Reykjavik. *-EMV*



Álafossvegur 29 • 270 Mosfellsbær
+354 899 6903
palli@knifemaker.is
soffia@knifemaker.is
www.knifemaker.is
www.kitchenknives.is





FOOD, BEER, AND GOOD TIMES

Enjoy The Beer Garden during your stay in Reykjavik

Björgardurinn (The Beer Garden) is a welcome addition to Reykjavik. Opened in 2015 in Fosshotel Reykjavik, it has become a popular spot to dine on delicious food, grab a refreshing beer and spend time with friends or family. It's a great meeting place for beer lovers and foodies alike. The Beer Garden offers a variety of good beer on tap as well as bottled beer from breweries all over the world. Staff members are specialists when it comes to pairing the right food with the right beer and they firmly believe that beer enhances every meal.

Best Beers

The beer menu is so impressive that it may take some time to order. Guests can choose from English-style beers, ales, wheat beers, nitro draughts, Belgian beers, lagers, Trappist beers, stouts, porters, and fruit beers. For the adventurous, there are 'wild beers', which have earthy characteristics that produce a sour beer. Wild beers go perfectly with spicy and pickled foods, for instance.



Cool Cocktails

The Beer Garden offers an eclectic range of cocktails, some of which include beer as an ingredient. Again, it will be difficult to make a choice! The Weissen Sour mixes bourbon, lemon, sugar, marmalade, bitters and white ale, while the Dark and Stormy Shandy consists of butter-washed rum, ginger, lime, saison/IPA/pilsner, topped with dark rum. Classic cocktails are available like Old Fashioned, Manhattan, and Sidecar and, for those not interested in alcoholic beverages, there are Mocktails like a classic Shirley Temple and a Tutti Frutti, which is a mix of fruit juices, fresh berries and lime.

Scrumptious Food

The food on the Beer Garden menu has been carefully selected to pair with the rotating selection of beer. The sausage bar is a favourite, with handmade Grillowa cheese sausages straight from Iceland's finest sausage maker, served in brioche bread. The sausages come with inventive toppings on



choice sausages like peppers and dill, chili tomato and cheese, carrots and Jerusalem artichokes as well as dates, duck and bacon. Slow cooked beef ribs are popular along with fish 'n chips and a grilled cheese sandwich on a sourdough bun with smoked Gouda and Icelandic mozzarella cheese. The Beer Garden also offers small bites that perfectly accompany beer such as sweet potato fries, pickled cucumbers, marinated Kalamata olives, and potato salad.

For a memorable meal and delicious drinks, stop by the Beer Garden during your stay in Reykjavik. There is always great beer, tasty food and good times to be had. *-JG*

Björgardurinn
Pórunnartún 105 Reykjavík
+354 531 9030
bjorgardurinn@bjorgardurinn.is
bjorgardurinn.is






AN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Reykjavik University attracts top students from many countries



International students choose Reykjavik University for its unique opportunity to study and research subjects in an interdisciplinary approach. For instance, students can cross programmes, studying business with computer science, and computer science with engineering, which is perfect for those interested in multiple academic programmes. The



university, which has about 3,500 students, offers undergraduate, graduate and PhD programmes in science and engineering, law, business, and computer science.

Positive experiences

Reykjavik University brings together top students from around the world. Shanna-Lei Caridad Dacanay traded her sunny

island state of Hawaii for an 18-month programme in Iceland. “I arrived 10 months ago to do an engineering degree with an emphasis on renewable energy,” she says. “Iceland is a very special place, with its hot springs, geysers and geothermal energy, and if you have a passion for renewable energy, Reykjavik University is the perfect place to pursue that passion.”

Unique teaching methods

The university emphasizes hands-on learning that prepares students for the challenges they will face in the workplace. “You get to take site visits and learn about where the energy is generated,” says Shanna. “You get to actually experience where the energy comes from.” This approach means Reykjavik University students will complete actual, real world assignments and projects, often in collaboration with companies and institutions based in Iceland.

Small equals good

The number of students at Reykjavik University is small compared to other universities, and all teaching takes place under one roof, which creates a friendly, cooperative sense of community. “My classes are so great,” says Shanna. “We all get along and share the same academic interests, and professors are so knowledgeable and helpful.” International students have mentioned the friendly atmosphere as one of the University’s great advantages.

Vibrant Reykjavik

Reykjavik, which has about 120,000 inhabitants, is a modern, safe city that offers many advantages for international students. “I first visited Reykjavik for a three-week summer programme at the university and I found that I didn’t want to leave,” says Shanna. “I ended up applying for the 18-month programme because there was so much more I wanted to learn about and explore. I’m sure that renewable energy is fascinating to learn about anywhere, but in Iceland, it’s on your doorstep. This has been one of the best decisions I have made.”

Visit the Reykjavik University website for more information on their programmes and why international students are choosing to further their studies at RU. -JG

Reykjavik University
 Menntavegur 1-101 Reykjavik
 +354 599 6200
 vefstjori@ru.is
 www.ru.is



Shanna-Lei Caridad Dacanay.



THE ICELANDIC PHALLOLOGICAL MUSEUM

From penises of elves to those of whales

The Icelandic Phallogological Museum in Reykjavik is, without a doubt, one of a kind. It contains a collection of phallic specimens that belong to various types of mammals. In the museum you can see a collection of more than 220 penises and penile parts that belong to all the land and sea mammals found in Iceland. It even has on display the penis of an old, Icelandic gentleman who died in 2011 at the age of 95. Furthermore, the museum has between 40–50 specimens from foreign mammals including a giraffe and an elephant.

“The purpose of the museum is showing these specimens,” says the curator, Hjörtur Sigurðsson, “but it’s also a scientific museum. Many professionals, such as biologists and doctors visit the museum to study. The purpose is also to educate and amuse people and, of course, to lift the taboo that has shrouded this subject for so long. It’s just a part of the anatomy; people should be able to discuss these things.”

Hjörtur says that what gets the most attention are the big things, like the penis



of a sperm whale that is 1.7 metres long and weighs somewhere between 70–80 kilos. Strangely, the human penis gets a lot of attention too!

For the foreigners, the folklore section is popular. “They find it very funny that we can display penises from elves, trolls and the hidden people.” Regarding the

hidden people: some claim they can see the hidden man’s penis; especially the women. -SJ

 **The Icelandic Phallogological Museum**
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A TASTE OF NEPAL

Nepalese Kitchen has delicious food, a warm atmosphere and friendly service.

Nepalese Kitchen is a cosy restaurant on Reykjavík's Laugavegur that is truly a feast for the senses. Upon walking inside, guests are greeted by the aroma of delicious spices as well as a welcome from its friendly owner, Deepak Panday. Deepak, who was born in Nepal, has been living in Iceland for about 10 years, and takes great care in creating a warm atmosphere, first class service, a diverse menu and absolutely delicious food. "I have been a chef for 34 years and I enjoy serving quality food and authentic spices for Icelanders and tourists," says Deepak. This passion for food started when he was a child and led him to work as a chef in many countries including England, India, Nepal, France and the United States, before settling in Iceland.

Inventive Dishes

The dishes, prepared by Deepak and his wife, are perfectly spiced, while the chefs are eager to cater for any dietary restrictions. "We have guests that have a gluten allergy, or a number of other food sensitivities and we are happy to prepare food just how they like it," says Deepak. "All our dishes are made from scratch for each individual guest." The menu is so diverse, it could be difficult to choose just one dish! Diners will find chicken, lamb, seafood, and vegetarian choices with sauces ranging from delicate to hearty.

Special Spices

The key to Nepalese food is the spice used. Deepak is very concerned about the spices; not just how they taste but also how they impact the body and soul. "We have spices that can be helpful to diabetics, people that are stressed, and those with some food sensitivities," says Deepak. Every summer, he travels to India to hand-select the herbs and spices used in the restaurant. "I want to see the plants for myself, to see that they are the best quality," he says.

Beautiful Space

The restaurant is tastefully decorated with a nod to Nepali culture in the art, linens and even music. It's clear that the restaurant is a



labour of love and Deepak's passion for quality food shines through. "It is so important to cook good food for people; it gives them so much. People feel loved when they get good food," says Deepak. One of his favorite dishes on the menu is a Nepali curry. "The spice mixture is unique and it comes directly from my mother." Plan to stop by Nepalese Kitchen

during your next stop to Reykjavík for tasty food, a wide selection of beer and wine, and warm service. -JG

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THE ALL-ICELANDIC WOOL SHOP

The Icelandic Handknitting Association of Iceland sells Icelandic wool and products

Sheep came to Iceland with the Viking settlers and quickly proved their value, not only for their meat but also their wool and skins. Living conditions were very basic and especially tough in the cold and dark winter months. Sheep helped keep the settlers alive.

These Icelandic sheep have two types of fleece—an outer, weather and water repellent layer and a soft, warm fleece close to the skin. Combined, they have provided warm clothing for farmers and seamen, adults, children and babies for centuries. Making sweaters became a tradition in farmhouses, cottages and houses around the country.

From home to market

The Handknitting Association of Iceland was founded in 1977 to help knitters to get their handiwork marketed. A group of women formed the association, establishing standards and guidelines for the production that was—and still is, an important supplement to many family incomes. Shortly thereafter, they opened a shop to sell their members' woollen goods at Skólavörðustígur 19, the main shopping street that descends from Hallgrímskirkja, the cathedral overlooking the city.

Find the real thing

In today's globalised society, it is increasingly difficult to be sure you are getting a genuine article, rather than one made thousands of miles away, with wool that lacks the characteristics



that has made Icelandic wool so special for hundreds of years.

The Handknitting Assn.'s shop only stocks genuine Icelandic wool and clothing made by professional Icelandic knitters, so you can be certain you are getting the true, well-made product. Look for the logo to be sure.

Their motto from the outset has been, 'Buy directly from the people who make them'. Walking into the shop, one cannot help but be amazed at the skill and productivity of these ladies—and some men, too, from all walks of life, living in all parts of the country. Every item has that sense of individual uniqueness that only handmade items carry.

Traditional and modern styles

The world of knitting has changed dramatically since the association began. A few decades ago,

the designs took the form of the 'lopapeysa' or sweater, with its distinctive scalloped pattern, which has become so popular worldwide, but numerous young Icelandic designers have also turned their attention to wool as a medium of choice for their fashion designs, resulting in new products, styles and colours.

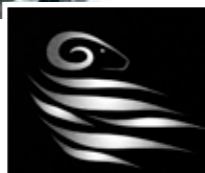
Today, there is a wide range of sweaters, gloves, hats, scarves, socks, bags and many other items in sizes to suit everyone from a Viking warrior (or farmer) to a pretty fashion model to a newborn baby.

The store is a centre, not only for selling the finished products, but also for supplying the wool and all the accessories required to make woollen items. If knitting is your hobby, there is a world of warm designs just

waiting for you. Icelandic wool wears very well and it is not uncommon for people to wear sweaters many years and for them to still look fresh.

Visitors can have their purchases shipped to them and they can also order from the website. That includes the patterns, wool, needles and accessories, not just the clothing.

- ASF



The Handknitting Association of Iceland
 Skólavörðustígur 19 • 101 Reykjavík
 +354 552 1890
 handknit@handknit.is
 www.handknit.is

IMPORTANT BUSINESS NICHE

Bergrisi Hugbúnaður helps companies improve service and increase sales through its solutions.

Iceland just welcomed its one-millionth tourist in 2016 and the year is barely two-thirds over. Tourism has increased by 34% from last year and according to the Icelandic Tourist Board, there will be about 1.5 million tourists this year. Business is booming and there is a great need for service providers to be able to seamlessly handle transactions, whether in Reykjavik, or in the countryside. Traffic is growing at everywhere from museums to campgrounds.

Bergrisi Hugbúnaður is a company that specializes in solving these problems for service providers in the areas of parking, showers, washing machines, dryers, electricity, and heating. Other service areas include cooking, gates, doors, lockers and toilets. The company has developed its own software and hardware for handling transactions and controlling access to different service areas. "Bergrisi lets customers easily track the sales of its services whether it's access to shower facilities, a washing machine or museum entrance," says Guðlaugur Magnússon, the founder of Bergrisi. "The role of Bergrisi is to provide a bridge between resellers and service providers." Resellers include travel agencies, hotels, and booking businesses. "The solutions we offer provide businesses the opportunity to connect their systems to software that could improve service and increase sales," he says.

Tourism on the rise

Iceland is having a moment. Visitors from around the world are flocking to the country to hike its isolated highlands, book tours to Europe's largest manmade ice cave in Langjökull glacier, ride horses along placid fjords, bask in the summer midnight sun, and catch a glimpse of the northern



lights during winter months. The Icelandic Tourist Board reported in July that about 936,000 people have visited Iceland this year and 235,000 visitors departed from

Keflavík International Airport in July alone; about 55,000 more than last year, showing an increase in tourism of about 30% for that month.

While tourism injects much needed revenue into Iceland's economy, business needs are changing and becoming more urgent to handle the high numbers of tourists. Bergrisi fills an important business niche and is committed to helping small business, large companies and independent contractors handle business more efficiently at a cost effective price. Visit www.bergrisi.is for more information on solutions that might make sense for your business. -JG

Bergrisi Hugbúnaður
 Mailbox 8030 • 128 Reykjavík.
 +354 578-2277
 bergrisi@bergrisi.is
 www.bergrisi.is

LEATHER DESIGNER

Ladies handbags, earrings and necklaces

Quality Icelandic design and leather handcraft is much sought after. “My first leather design was a handbag painted with colourful artwork and patterns,” says Guðrún Stefánsdóttir, a successful independent architect who found a second career in creative leather designs.

Guðrún designs leather handbags and now she’s added necklaces and earrings to her Ark Art accessory collection. “I wanted to use the leather cut-offs for something useful, when I came up with the idea to use them to make jewellery—earrings and necklaces.”

Guðrún’s Ark Art leather jewellery is recognisable by her use of thin leather rings or squares and use of colours. It is a sophisticated yet simple design, skilfully using geometric shapes and colours. Guðrún graduated from the Royal School of Architecture in Denmark in 1986. After working at an architect’s office,

she started her own business. “I’ve worked on some amazing projects, ranging from large buildings to single family homes. My favourite projects are those where I design everything from A-Z for private homes. Those projects would typically involve the house and interior design, the landscaping around the house and the furniture inside.” Available upon your request

The Ark Art collection is available at the National Art Gallery, Snorrastofa in Reykholt, at Rammagerðin at the Keflavík International Airport, and directly from Guðrún. More information can be found on Facebook: Arkart-leatherdesign. -NHH



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THE BRAVE GET THE BEST

The Sea Baron's Fish Meals Attract Visitors from All Over the World

Iceland has many 'different' foods which have their roots in seafaring history. The Vikings came up with many novel ways of preserving their foods—and their traditions continue to this day. Some of these foods sound unappealing, to say the least, and it takes the adventurous soul to step out and try them. Iceland is for the adventurous and they reap the benefits of the brave. The timid stick to burgers!



The Sea Baron in True spirit

A former fisherman and Coast Guard chef, Kjartan Halldórsson, also known as the Sea Baron, was the master of unusual fish dishes. His lobster soup, for example, has gained fame around the world, earning it the title of "the world's greatest lobster soup". While he never revealed the secrets of his recipe, that didn't prevent the restaurant from being filled every day with aficionados.

He entered the restaurant business by chance. One day, when standing by his boxes of fish, some foreign visitors asked if he could prepare some fish for them. Spotting an opportunity, he ran to the nearest hardware store to buy a grill—and was in business! His visitors were invited to dine in his shop in this improbable restaurant. Word quickly spread and soon he was shifting his boxes out to make room for tables and chairs. He took the unusual and created delicious meals that no one else had thought of. He took old recipes, some of which sounded revolting, and made meals that have established his reputation around the world.

The Passing of the Sea Baron

Kjartan, the true Sea Baron, recently passed away. But his legacy will surely live on for many years to come. A few years ago, Kjartan passed his mantle on to Elísabet Jean Skúladóttir, an energetic and vibrant young woman who actually bought the restaurant at the Sea Baron's request. Kjartan wanted to make sure his place would be well taken care of in the future, but he used to joke that, not only did Elísabet make a great investment by purchasing the restaurant, but he was included in the deal himself. Kjartan's spirit will surely remain palpable as visitors will not only feel his energy but he will actually be there to greet them—in the form of a wax sculpture!

Dining as a Seafaring Experience

Kjartan's restaurant is popular with the fishermen who sailed for many years from Reykjavik. It is filled with memorabilia donated by old sea captains and their families that fill it with a character all its own. Handmade model sailing boats, pictures of ships of the past and stuffed birds fill the second floor's walls, where groups of up to 35 can celebrate together. Eating at the polished tables, sitting on cushioned fish barrels, surrounded by paraphernalia of the

sea, it is an experience that will leave you with both good memories, a satisfied appetite—and perhaps, a rather shocked mind that you would actually have eaten fermented fish and that it tasted so, so good. Moby Dick on a Stick (minke whale on a spear) for example, is a play on words with great impact, delicious and stirring—as are the great variety of other fish spears with a mix of cod, blue ling, salmon, trout, lobster and giant shrimp, to name a few. Also worth mentioning is an Icelandic specialty dish, available at noon on Thursdays, a combination of fermented fish. On the first Saturday of the month they offer skate with heaps of hamsatól (fried fat), potatoes and rye bread with butter. This delicacy is only available from 1st September–30th April. For desert, as a true Icelander, one should enjoy grjónnagratgur—or rice pudding of sorts, often served with raisins and cinnamon flavoured sugar.

Bon Voyage Sea Baron!

The Sea Baron will be missed dearly by all who knew him. His heritage lives on and there is no doubt that his recipes will continue to warm the bellies of both Icelanders and travellers alike for generations to come. This man has surely put his mark on the restaurant landscape and changed the way we perceive a grand dining experience.

- ASF

Seabaron
 Geirsgata 8 • 101 Reykjavík
 +354 553 1500
 seabaron@gmail.com
 www.saegefimm.is

THE JOYFUL WONDERLAND

The Little Christmas Shop that is festive all year round

Anne Helen, owner of 'The Little Christmas Shop' on Laugavegur, Reykjavik's main shopping street, is what you might call a 'one woman wonder'. Ten years ago, she decided it was time for a change and turned to doing what she does better than most of us; making the world a prettier place, one Christmas ball at a time.

In the Land of Eternal Christmas

Anne Helen, a genuine aesthete, says she has always had somewhat of a Christmas obsession and an intense passion for things of beauty. She never goes for anything average but hunts for things of quality that truly stand out. Though she imports merchandise from all over Europe, her ambition is to specialise in Icelandic handiwork and ornaments. She already has an extensive range, most



made exclusively for her by a number of craftsmen, each having a distinctive approach and working in materials such as wool, glass and clay. In



addition to customary Christmas ornaments, she includes local folklore figures, like the thirteen Yule Lads and the Christmas Cat.

Anne Helen loves it to tell customers about Icelandic Christmas traditions. Visitors often stop by simply because they've heard of her hospitality and the shop's friendly atmosphere. They rarely leave empty handed. After all, placing an Icelandic Yule Lad on your Christmas tree every year is a great way to remember your visit to Iceland.

-HP

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JOE & THE JUICE

JOE & THE JUICE GETTING JUICED IN ICELAND

Joe & the Juice is an on-trend coffee shop/ juice bar that opened in January 2015 at Keflavik International Airport. The concept answers today's traveller needs for a quick pick-me-up in the form of great espresso drinks, freshly pressed smoothies and juices, and a variety of sandwiches prepared on the spot.

A Winner Is Born

Created by the Danish entrepreneur Kaspar Basse, Joe & the Juice won the prestigious FAB Awards in the category of 'Best Airport Coffee Shop of the Year' in Copenhagen for 2013 and 2014.

Whew! Hot!

The popular brand, known for its attractive 'juicers' and hip electronic dance music, can be found all over Denmark, and has been popping up elsewhere in Europe—Norway, Sweden, Germany, the UK, France, and more recently, here in Iceland. According to Joe & the Juice's Icelandic manager, Daníel Kári Stefánsson, "People come for the atmosphere as well as for the healthy drinks, and it's been going even better than we initially expected. The reaction from the Icelandic public has been great".

Flavour, Nutrition and Hydration

Unmistakable names for freshly pressed juice combinations such as 'Sex Me



Up'—passion fruit, ginger and apple, 'Joe's Green Kiss'—spinach, ginger and apple and one called 'Hell of a Nerve'—strawberry, elderberry and banana, are sure to grab your attention. For a distinctly Danish touch, Joe's sandwiches are made with traditionally baked rye bread, using flavourful combinations of fillings such as Serrano ham, mozzarella and tomato, and a touch of pesto.

Size Matters

Joe & the Juice uses a unique blend of coffee beans that have been specially cultivated in South America. There's no extra charge if you want to up your caffeine intake with



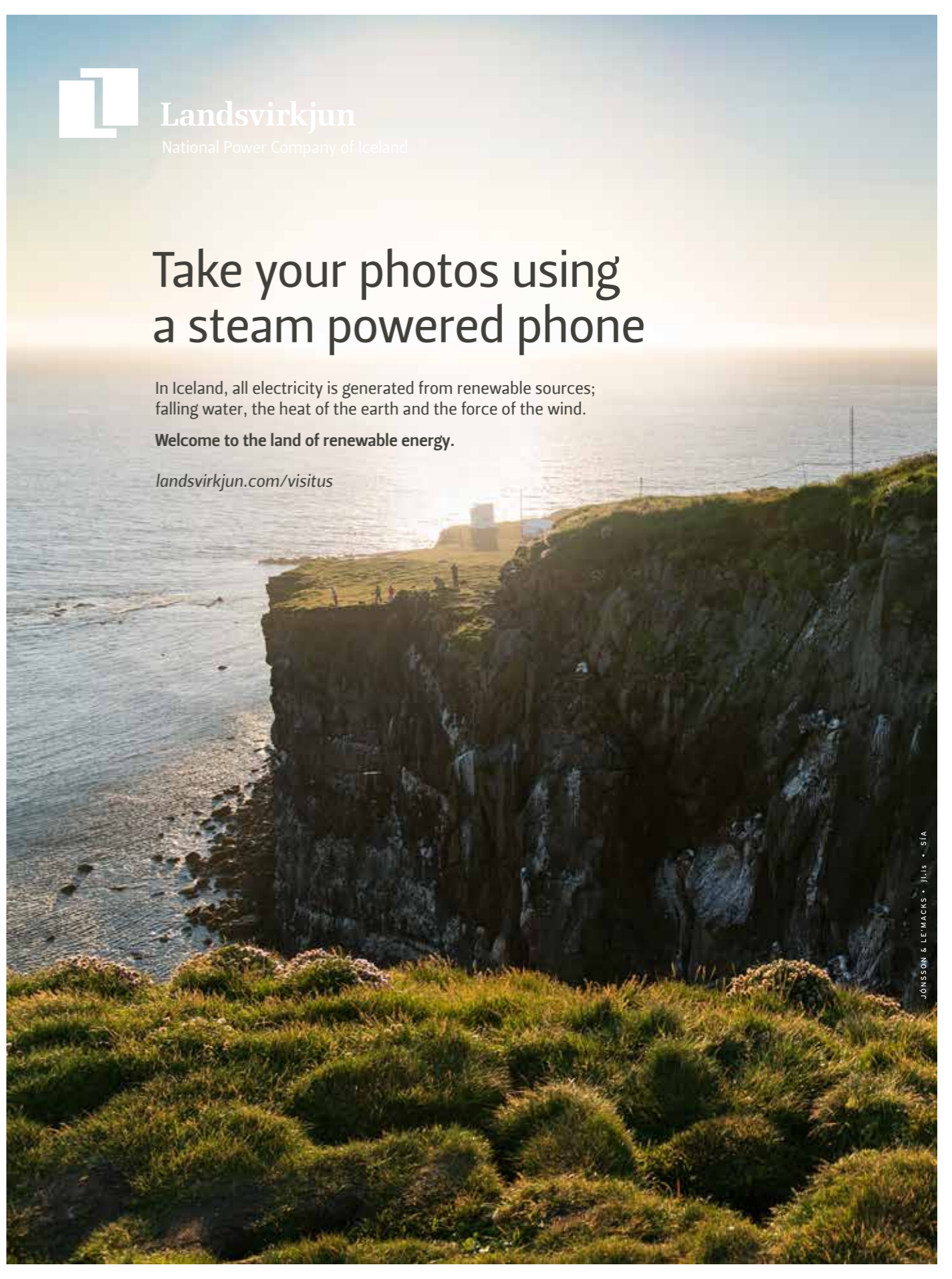
a double shot in your latte and you choose your cup size—in pink, purple, yellow or grey. How about a ginger shot for a natural boost of energy? Coming right up! Just ask!

Where to Get Juiced in Iceland

You can find Joe & the Juice at Reykjavik's Kringlan Shopping Mall, Kópavogur's Smáralind Shopping Mall, Laugar Fitness Centre and Keflavik Airport's check-in lounge. A new Joe & the Juice opened in Keflavik airport's departure lounge on March 15th. This is one place to check out!

-EMV

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JOURNEY TO THE INSIDE OF A GLACIER

Experience a Glacier from the Inside with Into the Glacier

Exploring the surface of a glacier is thrilling, but actually getting inside one is a once in a lifetime experience. The staff behind Into the Glacier offer travellers that rare opportunity. Situated in the western part of Langjökull, the second largest ice cap in Iceland, and 1,260 metres above sea level, the ice cave stretches 40 metres deep underground, giving visitors the chance to see ice that's been forming over centuries. The ice cave stretches more than 550 metres into the glacier.

Trip to the Top

The classic guided tour begins in Húsafell, which is 130km from Reykjavik, when guests board one of the most unique vehicles ever made, a customised super truck. This truck, which seats up to 35 passengers, was acquired from NATO, who originally used as a cruise missile launcher. The 20km trip up to the glacier is an experience in itself in good weather or bad. Clear days offer exquisite views of the vast icy desert, while poor weather conditions reveal the power and unpredictability of Icelandic weather.

Enter the Glacier

Once inside, travellers, with crampons attached to their feet, get to experience



something very few have seen. Lit by LED lights, guests begin to explore the tunnel, with a knowledgeable guide leading small groups, sharing many interesting facts about Iceland's glaciers. Travellers are treated to views of gaping crevices as they look above. Additionally, there is a special area in the cave, which developers named 'the chapel', with LED-lit blocks of ice supporting

wooden beams, which serves as a venue for weddings, marriage proposals and concerts.

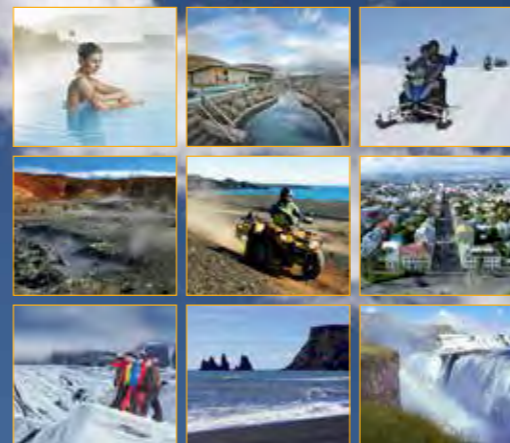
Into the Glacier offers daily departures from Húsafell at 12:30pm and the tour lasts about four hours during the winter. Day tours from Reykjavik to the ice cave are available as well. For those that would like to treat themselves to a meal, you can buy a scrumptious lunch at Hotel Húsafell before you head out on your excursion. So be sure to put Into the Glacier on your list of 'must do's in Iceland!' -JG

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CATCH THE NORTHERN LIGHTS ALL YEAR AROUND

Aurora Reykjavik's Northern Lights Center lets you see the Lights all year

There is perhaps nothing more magical and unforgettable than witnessing the beauty of a Northern Lights display in one's lifetime. It's the dream of many who come to Iceland, but alas, those unpredictable, frenetic lights tend to have a mind of their own and don't always show up on cue—and certainly not in the summer months. So it is with great joy that we welcome one of Iceland's most recent additions—Aurora Reykjavik's Northern Lights Center, where the Northern Lights are always on display.

A Unique Experience

The centre is the unique creation of four enterprising young Icelanders who recognised the need for just such a place—a kind of one-stop-shop for all things Northern Lights. Located on the far side of Reykjavik's Old Harbour, the centre serves both educational and inspirational purposes. Here you can read up on the auroras through stories and legends from around the world,

learn something about the science behind this amazing phenomenon and gaze at spectacular Northern Lights photography from top Icelandic photographers. There is even a specially equipped 'photo booth' where you can learn how to adjust your camera's settings should you want to try your hand at capturing an auroral display yourself.

Soothing Sights and Sounds

However, Aurora Reykjavik's real pull and ace up its sleeve is its fantastic HD time-lapse film of recent auroral activity. Projected onto a 7 metre-wide screen, you can sit back and enjoy this 13 minute film that features a dazzling display of auroral activity, accompanied by relaxing music. Therapeutic and restful are two words that come to mind to describe this zen-like experience.

Hot coffee and choice gifts

Before leaving, be sure to grab a free cup of coffee in the Northern Lights Center



gift shop and check out the impressive display of clothing, glassware, paintings and woollen knitwear by some of Iceland's most creative designers. The theme? You guessed it. *-EMV*

Setting the record straight

While in Iceland, you might be told that the outside air temperature needs to be around 0°C or below in order to see the Northern Lights. The oft quoted but erroneous assumption is that the Northern Lights only appear at these temperatures. We would just like to set the record straight that while it is true that the Northern Lights do happen to be visible more often when the air is cold and the sky is clear, their appearance has nothing to do with actual temperature of the air.



Aurora Reykjavik

Grandagarður 2 • 101 Reykjavík
+354 780 4500

info@aurorareykjavik.is
www.aurorareykjavik.is



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ANCESTORS' KNOWLEDGE

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In the old days, people still had knowledge about nature's richness. They used what Mother Earth provided them: picked leaves and herbs, or searched the shores for the ocean's supplies, such as seaweed. The shore is a garden; you just have to know where to harvest and what to collect.

A Pioneer

Biologist Eyjólfur Friðgeirsson knows nature pretty well. He is passionate about the harvesting of nature, which he sees as a food source and a treasure for delicacies. In 2005 he started his company Íslensk hollusta (Icelandic Wholesomeness), promoting the use of natural Icelandic products in their own taste and freshness, such as cheese and varieties of herbal tea. Nothing is added or changed in the production of the products.

Eyjólfur is a pioneer in his field in Iceland. He was the first to revive the idea of using seaweed as a dried snack and adding Iceland

moss, angelica and birch leaves into cheese making. He was also the first to create a bath salt from Icelandic geothermal salt, using seaweed and Mount Hekla pumice. The country is rich in natural resources when it comes to nutriment.

His goal was to reawaken folk knowledge about how to harness these gifts of the earth. The idea proved successful, and today his goods can be purchased in souvenir shops around Iceland. Northern Lights Salt gift packages, a seasoned salt made according to his special recipe, are available on board Icelandair's aircraft in their Saga Shop.

Hand-Picked and Healthy

The hand-picked Icelandic moss is ready for use in tea or porridge. In the old days, seaweed was consumed in times of famine. Today we know that there is hardly a more nutrient-rich food. By adding seaweed to

your daily diet, you can be sure that you are consuming ingredients from unspoiled Icelandic waters.

Homemade sauces, juices and jams made from traditional materials are a treat. Pamper your body with a rich bath salt, or treat yourself with Icelandic Herbal Tea and Arctic Thyme Tea from Íslensk hollusta. Try the Viking Salt, produced with an ancient salt production method. The light and compact Seven Spices Gift Packet containing tea, salt and seaweed is an excellent contribution to your cuisine.

"Mother Earth knows what is best; we pick it for you, and you just have to take it home," says Eyjólfur. - DT

Íslensk hollusta
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 +354 864 4755
 islenskhollusta@internet.is
 www.islenskhollusta.is

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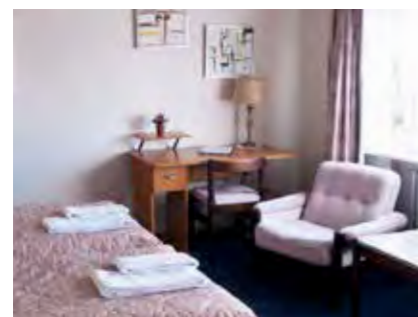
THE PLACE TO STAY IN GRINDAVÍK

Guesthouse Borg offers economical comfort in a friendly house

In most countries, the opportunity to experience life in a fishing town has all but disappeared. Not so in Iceland, where Grindavík is one of the busiest. Situated a few kilometres from the world-famous Blue Lagoon, 20 minutes from Keflavik's International airport and 40 minutes from the capital, the town is packed with history going back as far as the first settlers.

A geological hotspot, the area offers such a wide array of other tours, sights and experiences that one holiday is not enough.

Guesthouse Borg is an ideal place to stay, meet interesting people and enjoy the facilities and fun the town offers. It caters for individuals, couples, families and groups of up to 16 people in a clean,



modestly-priced homestay accommodation. You'll find a full kitchen where you can cook your own meals, a laundry and a computer to go online. Breakfasts are provided on a self-service basis.

Owners Björk and Magnús make this a comfortable home from which to launch out to explore the area. -ASF

Guesthouse Borg
 Borgarhrauni 2 - 240 Grindavík
 +354 895 8686
 www.guesthouseborg.com
 ghborg@simnet.is



explaining the area and showing them on a map the best places to visit.

It's in the evenings and on weekends that things really take off, though. It's a small place, but packed with character. A piano in the corner is often pressed into use, making it a fun and inspiring evening. Whether you are a local or just visiting, you'll feel at home.

Bryggjan is open from 8am-11pm on weekdays and from 9am-midnight or so if there is a lot of action, on weekends. Bryggjan can also be found on Facebook by the name of "Bryggjan Kaffihús". -ASF

BRYGGJAN
 Kaffihúsið í Grindavík
 Miðgarði 2 - 240 Grindavík
 +354 426 7100
 fiskinet@simnet.is

GRINDAVÍK'S HARBOUR CAFÉ

The reputation of the Bryggjan netmakers' café is spreading fast

Walk down to Grindavík's harbour and you may see the nets. Then you'll know you're there. Bryggjan's main work is repairing fishing nets and lines—nets that would completely cover the nearby mountain and lines that would stretch way beyond Reykjavik, over 50km away.

growing number of visitors from all over the world finding it, it is quickly becoming the café of choice in the area. Little wonder, as the help and friendliness of the owners is only matched by the delicious food they offer. My suggestion: don't leave without having a bowl of their soup. It's really good.

This is a fishing town and the café is a fishermen's café—though, with the

While I was there, one of the owners was spending time with visiting tourists,

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A TRUE GEM

Keflavík's Diamond Suites Boutique Hotel

Iceland's magnificent nature is in a class of its own with few, if any, rivals when it comes to its scope, diversity and utter uniqueness. Many a first time visitor has been virtually stopped in their tracks as they take in the beauty of the land that confronts them. Words never seem to do the subject justice, but one American writer, Stephen Markley, records in his book, 'Tales of Iceland', "The problem with driving around Iceland is that you're basically confronted by a new soul-enriching, breathtaking, life-affirming natural site every five minutes". Totally!

Step into your own world of luxury

Surrounded by all this natural magnificence, it is only fitting that visitors to the country should have access to equally impressive accommodation. The Diamond Suites Boutique Hotel is the only five-star hotel in Iceland. The hotel opened officially on 17th May to a discerning clientele who are looking for something above and beyond the norm. For some it's the hotel's attention to detail and superior craftsmanship, for others it's the unsurpassed customer service. For others, for whom privacy is not just a luxury but a necessity, Diamond Suites is the only option.



With your own private entrance, you will step into your own exclusive domain where your privacy and peace of mind are assured.

The Five Gemstone Suites

The hotel's five suites, named after precious gemstones, each have their own unique theme and are decorated in a chic contemporary design with touches of elegance throughout—Versace marble tiles and wallpapers, glass taps by the renowned



Steinþór Jónsson

French designer, Philippe Starck, bathroom fixtures by Duravit, in-room whirlpool baths, private balconies and many other singular items found nowhere else in Iceland, if not the world. Other highlights include a beautiful solid oak headboard carved from a single, solid piece of wood, exquisite recessed lighting by Moooi, a decadent Versace dinner service, and the high-tech bathroom of your dreams.

"Having stayed in some of the most exclusive hotels in the world, we have tried to incorporate the best we have found throughout our travels into our concept", says owner/manager, Steinþór Jónsson.



"Virtually everything—from the choice of bevelled mirrors to the original artwork on the walls, right down to the smallest details I, with my wife, Hildur, have carefully and purposefully chosen."

The Diamond Suite Luxury Pack

If you opt for the best of the best, the Diamond Suite Luxury Pack meets that requirement in every way. All five suites can be opened up to form one spacious, 3,000 sq. foot private apartment with an sophisticated array of amenities including a personal butler, concierge and full time access to the hotel's service team, who are on hand to attend to your every need. "We understand that everyone has different needs and requirements, and it is our pleasure to accommodate each guest to the best of our ability", says Steinþór.



To help you make the most of your stay in Iceland, the luxury pack also includes a Range Rover and your own private driver/guide, so you can see Iceland in full comfort and style.

Kef Restaurant at your service

Enjoy your meals, either in your suite or in Hotel Keflavík's glass enclosed conservatory restaurant, run by chef Jenný Rúnarsdóttir, who won Iceland's Masterchef competition in 2012. Fresh Icelandic ingredients form the basis of Jenny's inspirational dishes which are best enjoyed with a glass of wine from the hotel's exclusive wine list—a small Barolo Cannubi 2008 with your dinner, sir?

A family of hoteliers

With 30 years experience of managing Hotel Keflavík behind him, Steinþór is well

positioned to open Iceland's very first five star hotel. "17th May, 2016 is in fact the 30 year anniversary of Hotel Keflavík, which we opened with my parents in 1986. So it is a great honour for us to inaugurate the Diamond Suite in their memory."

In the months leading up to the grand opening, the hotel has hosted dignitaries, famous actors and well known singers as well as several exclusive visitors seeking a high-end hotel experience. "We are grateful for the enthusiastic feedback and positive reviews we have received from our guests", concludes Steinþór.

—EMV



Hotel Keflavík
Vatnsnesvegji 12-14 • 230 Keflavík
+354 420 7000
steini@kef.is
www.kef.is



TARAMAR is a company at the forefront of natural pure skin care in Iceland. The Reykjavik-based company provides a line of products that use fresh, organic ingredients instead of murky formulas that many “natural” products claim to use. The products are based on many years of scientific research, including elements of food science. Dr. Guðrún Marteinsdóttir, Professor at University of Iceland, founded the company whose core themes are: science, slow cosmetics and purity. TARAMAR offers creams and serums that are designed to reconstruct collagen fibers, restart healthy metabolism and protect the skin cells from aging due to oxidation and environmental factors.

Natural Ingredients

A multitude of products tout “natural” and “organic” ingredients, but that does not always equate to high quality as many companies also use harmful compounds in their products. TARAMAR, however, uses only high quality and pure ingredients including Icelandic seaweed, lava filtered water and local medicinal herbs. The formulas are based on cutting-edge technology and scientific principles. These ingredients, along with naturally derived peptides and enzymes, work to improve the strength and health of the skin. TARAMAR has incorporated these potent ingredients and used their bioactivity to create pure and safe products that work with nature, not against it. Icelandic seaweed and herbal extractions are known to have high antioxidant values and help decrease inflammation and redness, while promoting healthier cells. In these products, TARAMAR encapsulates the bioactive compounds—enzymes and peptides—into liposomal delivery systems, thus ensuring beneficial actions at intercellular levels.

Comprehensive Product Line

TARAMAR offers a day treatment that is a moisturizing and cell activating cream light enough to wear under makeup. It goes on smoothly and has a pleasant, natural smell. You won't find strong, unnatural perfumes in the products. Also available is an anti-aging serum that strengthens the collagen fibers and hydrates skin for a smoother and firmer appearance. Next is a purifying treatment: an algae cleansing oil that helps awaken



Dr. Guðrún Marteinsdóttir

skin cells and firm the skin. Rounding out the product line is TARAMAR's night treatment that stimulates and restores skin cells while users sleep, reducing wrinkles and leaving the skin silky smooth.

All the products are based on innovative research using live cell models to understand how potent bioactives interact within cells and the damage that dirty formulas can cause. The products are so pure that, technically, they could be eaten.

Ancient Methods, Modernised

No other company in Iceland creates skin care products like TARAMAR. “We are modifying ancient techniques,” says Guðrún. “Most companies buy their ingredients and mix them together and 30 minutes later, there’s a cream. In contrast, we use slow cosmetic methodology; some of the extracts take 6 months to prepare. Nearly all the ingredients are made from scratch by us or Icelandic organic farmers, starting with seeding in early spring to become powerful extracts one year later. All the procedures are done by hand. When extracts are ready, they are hand pressed and your hands simply glow from the very beneficial power of the medicinal herbs”. The final product is extremely satisfying, with a deep, mature, luxurious feeling of a total harmony of all the compounds.



Unique Packaging

The majority of skin care products are packaged in clear or light bottles that can actually hurt the bioactive properties of the ingredients. Indeed, the powerful bioactives isolated from the seaweeds are

especially fragile and can break down when exposed to light. Clear containers don't offer the necessary protection. Therefore, TARAMAR decided to use black glass bottles to contain the products. While there is science behind

the decision, the bottles are also chic and eye-catching.

Available for Purchase

TARAMAR accepts orders on its website, www.TARAMAR.is, and they have products available at a duty free kiosk in Keflavik International Airport. For travellers visiting Reykjavik, products can be ordered and delivered to their hotel.

TARAMAR is looking at international markets like the United States, Germany and Japan. It is also possible to invest in the company in the form of B shares. For more information, email the company. -JG


TARAMAR
 Árleyrnir 8 • 112 Reykjavík
 +354 570 7100
 info@taramar.is
 www.taramar.is
 

THE NEW ACTS YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS AT ICELAND AIRWAVES

Winter is a hair's breadth away which means we can look forward to snow, Christmas, and (most importantly) Iceland Airwaves! The showcase festival has been going strong since 1999, bringing in top tier foreign acts all the while highlighting the best and most exciting Icelandic bands. With more than 200 bands performing this year, it's easy to get overwhelmed when picking what to go see. Here are a few local acts performing for the first time at Iceland Airwaves that we're sure will be the hot topic this year.

AYIA

This three-piece act may only have released one single, but it has absolutely blown us away. With deep drops, phasing synths, and a haunting voice, „Water Plant“ is a gourmet song for the audiophile. They've created high expectations, and we're excited to see if they can meet them.

ARON CAN

At only sixteen years, Aron Can has managed to create the kind of ripples in the Icelandic hip-hop scene that were all but impossible before the advent of YouTube. He released his mixtape Þekkir Strágin in May, which is composed of autotuned rap with melodic hooks, and has been a frequent topic of water cooler conversations since.



AUÐN

Icelandic black metal has been going through a renaissance and is only now starting to get the international recognition it deserves. Right at the forefront of this evolution is Auðn, a bleak and desolate band that transitions fluidly from explosive to calm. Seeing is believing, but please protect your ears!

GANGLY

This three-piece superband held Twitter hostage before their debut live show as people tried guessing who was in the band. Mixing mind-boggling visuals to a hybrid of electronica and R&B, each performance feels intimate, sincere, and out of this world.

JFDR

While Jófríður Ákadóttir is no stranger to Airwaves, having performed with Samaris and Pascal Pinon on numerous occasions, this is the first time she plays her solo material. Expect dreamy minimal pop with gentle and cyclical guitar plucking, and vocals sung so softly they sound like whispers.

SKRATTAR

If the wolf from Little Red Riding Hood had a soundtrack it would be written by Skrattar. Their music is dark, nihilistic, and seductive, with repetitive synth keys overlaid with resonant guitar twanging and huddled vocals reminiscent of Nick Cave. *-TR*



VEGAN DELIGHTS IN REYKJAVÍK

Iceland may have a reputation as a fish and lamb nation, but non-meat eaters rejoice; a growing number of restaurants are offering vegans and vegetarians more fine dining and casual options. In fact, dining out in Reykjavík has never been easier for vegetarians and vegans. Many cafes and restaurants have vegetarian dishes and most will cater to guests even if there is not a vegan-friendly menu item listed.



There are several vegan establishments to choose from that use fresh and local vegan-friendly ingredients and are sensitive to all food restrictions. For instance, those looking for something inventive and not just another veggie burger, should stop by AALTO Bistro for their scrumptious pumpkin burger. Kryddlegin Hjörtu and Kaffi Garðurinn offer some of the tastiest soups on the island, and Nepalese Kitchen can satisfy your need to spicy vegan cuisine. Be sure to save room for dessert as Eldur og Ís offers vegan crepes and Hafís serves up creamy vegan ice cream. It's a great time to be vegan in Reykjavík!

AALTO Bistro

AALTO Bistro is an elegant restaurant known for its true New Nordic style. The renowned chef Sveinn Kjartansson creates inventive dishes with fresh, local, seasonal ingredients leads the restaurant, which is housed in Norræna húsið (Nordic House). The chef takes great care to present a menu for all tastes and is sensitive to food restrictions.

Guests will find a delightfully diverse menu of meat-free and vegan options including a pumpkin burger served on a

homemade cracker with a baked potato, cashew nut pesto, crunchy kale and fresh salad. Vegetarian options include broccoli quiche served with walnuts, goat cheese and fresh salad; blue cheese quiche with cranberries, pumpkin seeds and a fresh salad; and a zucchini-herb fritatta with sautéed vegetables, figs, chutney and soupsnaps.

Dine at this architecturally significant building, designed by Finn Alvar Aalto, and sample the best of Icelandic cuisine.

www.aalto.is

Nepalese Kitchen

Nepalese Kitchen is a cozy restaurant on Laugavegur that is truly a gem in the local restaurant scene. Upon walking inside, guests are greeted by the aroma of divine exotic spices as well as a welcome from the friendly owner, Deepak Panday. Deepak, who was born in Nepal and has been living in Iceland about 10 years and loves cooking for locals and tourists alike.

The dishes, prepared by Deepak and his wife, are perfectly spiced and the chefs are eager to comply with any dietary restrictions, including vegan and vegetarian guests. All dishes are made from scratch for each individual guest and any food restriction can be accommodated. The menu is di-



verse and it could be difficult to choose just one dish! Guests will find vegetarian and vegan choices with sauces ranging from delicate to hearty. Options include chickpeas cooked with herbs and fresh coriander; spinach and potatoes cooked in herbs with a delicious masala sauce; cashew nuts cooked with red pepper, onion, tomato, ginger garlic and special herbs and spices; and a traditional Nepalese vegetarian dish with potatoes, bamboo shoots and black-eyed beans. There are so many delicious options to choose from!

Laugavegur 60A, 101 Reykjavik
 354 517 7795
www.nepalesekitchen.is

Kryddlegin Hjörtu

Kryddlegin Hjörtu, which translates to Seasoned Hearts, offers fresh and local cuisine in the heart of downtown Reykjavik. The owners chose the name because they put their heart and soul into preparing meals with the best ingredients Iceland has to offer. The cozy restaurant provides healthy, delicious food with a variety of tastes and the owners are committed to using first class fresh and local food production from local farmers. The restaurant prides itself in



their salad and soup bar that includes salsa, wild mushroom, and carrot soups.

Vegan and vegetarian options from the a la carte menu include vegetable lasagna served with bread and hummus; a peanut steak with vegan mushroom sauce, couscous and beets or apple salad; and vegetable fajitas. The chef is sensitive to food restrictions and can substitute meat and cheese in dishes when requested. Stop by Kryddlegin Hjörtu for a casual meal in a comfortable atmosphere with top notch food with fresh and local ingredients.

Hverfisgata 33, 101 Reykjavík
 +354 588 8818
<http://www.kryddleginhjortu.is/english>

Hafís

Ice cream is wildly popular in Iceland, and Icelanders are known to indulge in the sweet treat any time of year in even the worst weather conditions. A wonderful ice cream parlor can be found in Hafnarfjörður, just outside of Reykjavík. For those that don't consume milk products don't fret. The shop has a good selection of vegan ice cream and gelato. Hafís offers at least three vegan flavors at any given time and there is a good selection of candy and other toppings for a cone or cup. All ice cream and toppings use the highest quality ingredients and there are no dyes or other synthetic materials used in production.

The owner of Hafís traveled to Italy before he opened the shop to research production methods and ingredients used in classic gelato and ice cream. Each flavor is made with great care. One of the most popular vegan ice cream flavors is Turkish Pepper, which many Icelanders love and tourists are curious about. The shop has received rave reviews for its vegan ice cream, which is genuine and not a sorbet. For those with celiac disease, all ice cream at Hafís is gluten-free.

Bæjarhraun 2, Hafnarfjörður
 +354 437 0000
www.hafis.is

Kaffi Garðurinn

Situated on Klappartígur in the heart of the city centre, Garðurinn is a small café that offers a delightfully diverse menu of



and Turkish bean soup. All the soups are vegan and gluten-free and are packed with nutritious, fresh flavors. Other dishes include sautéed cauliflower with Indian spices, spinach lasagna, ground nut stew, vegetable curry and almond loaf. But, make sure you save room for dessert as there are an array of vegan and raw cakes and sweet treats.

Klappartígur 37, 101 Reykjavik
 +354 561 2345
www.kaffigarðurinn.is

Eldur og Ís

Savory and dessert crepes may not seem like an option for vegans, but that's not the case at Eldur og Ís. This charming ice cream shop has a crepe bar that offers an array of toppings to make the perfect crepe, and they can cater to those with food restrictions. Guests can choose from fresh fruit like bananas and berries to chocolate syrup to sprinkles. There is a vegan, gluten-free and lactose-free crepe available that will make your taste buds sing. The vegan crepes are made from buckwheat and rice and there are vegan toppings that include chocolate and fruits.

They also offer soft serve and Italian-style ice cream with flavors including the basics: vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry, as well as coffee, pistachio and several others. This family-operated business has become a staple in downtown Reykjavik and its central location, friendly staff and good reputation, is a favorite among locals and tourists alike. There are sofas and armchairs inside making it very comfortable to relax, enjoy a crepe, ice cream cone, hot chocolate or coffee.

Skólavörðustígur 2, Reykjavík 101
<https://www.facebook.com/eldurog>
 +354 571 2480



LE BISTRO

A Taste of France in the Heart of Reykjavík

Strolling along downtown Reykjavík's famous Laugavegur shopping street is always a treat. Here you will find a mix of eclectic businesses ranging from souvenir shops to the latest in chic Icelandic designer accessories. For the hungry, there are any number of possible eateries to choose from, but one rather unexpected, yet very welcome restaurant stands out from the crowd—Le Bistro.

A long-standing tradition comes to Iceland

Le Bistro takes its cues from the long-established tradition of Paris bistros that originated in the early 1800s. In France, bistros typically serve hearty home-style dishes in an informal setting and Reykjavík's very own bistro does an excellent job of bringing this timeless tradition to our doorstep. The menu sports many well known 'casseroles' such as lamb ragoût, boeuf bourguignon, and coq au vin—the perfect slow-cooked comfort food for a chilly Icelandic night out. And then there are classic dishes such as soupe à l'oignon, duck confit, and a gorgeous roasted salmon à l'Alsacienne that may have you swooning with delight. Pair your meal with wine by the bottle or by the glass from Le Bistro's impressive imported wine list, or maybe order a diablo menthe or a panaché (beer with lemonade) just for fun—c'est très français.

The Upper Room

Le Bistro offers a Fondue Feast and a Raclette Feast, which are served in a cosy little 'Swiss Chalet' on the 2nd floor. Whether you choose the cheese, meat or chocolate fondue (or all three), these quintessential Swiss dishes are perfect for celebrating special occasions among friends. (Note: You should reserve one day in advance.)

Leave room for dessert

Oven baked camembert with honey and nuts, served with sweet wine, a velvety mousse au chocolat, a 'skyramisú' (tiramisu

made with Icelandic skyr) or a heavenly crème brûlée are just some of the possibilities that will satisfy your sweet tooth and make a great meal truly complete.

Le Brunch et Le Petit Déjeuner

Le Bistro also offers breakfast, every day from 9am to 11.30am and brunch, every day from 9am to 2pm. You can choose between the Icelandic, French, English or Healthy Brunch versions and be sure to grab a couple of freshly baked croissants or a pain au chocolat from the Le Bistro's on-site bakery to take away.

For a true taste of France, head on over to Le Bistro, located on the corner of Klapparstígur and Laugavegur, downtown Reykjavík.

-EMV





LE BISTRO
 Laugavegur 12 • 101 Reykjavík
 +551 5979
 www.lebistro.is
 lebistro@lebistro.is







WEST *Iceland*

The beauty and variety of Icelandic nature is everywhere in the West of Iceland. Magnificent views overlooking mountains and glaciers, fertile regions, colourful birdlife, abundant rivers and lakes, fjords and bays, along with gushing

geothermal activity. Land and history form an unbroken whole as the setting for sagas like Sturlunga, Egil's Saga, Eyrbyggja and Laxdaela, not to mention the rich folklore and tales of adventure. Tours bring history to life as museums and historical sites abound.



#WESTICELAND

DELVING INTO HISTORY

The Settlement Center in Borgarnes Takes You on a Trip Through Time

Some 1100 years ago, Iceland was a place covered with impenetrable forests and dangerous bogs, and it took groups of bold men to cross the rough North Atlantic sea, to discover the remote island and determine to settle there in order to start a new life. They were the first to name rivers, mountains and places that are world famous today, and many farms are still able to trace their history back to the days of the Settlement. As the most important source of Iceland's history, the Sagas are a collection of exciting stories built around these first settlers. Understanding Iceland completely means paying tribute to their achievements, which made the country what it is today.

A Warehouse of Exhibitions

In 2006 an Icelandic couple, actor Kjartan Ragnarsson and news reporter Sigríður Margrét Guðmundsdóttir, decided to dedicate a project to the story of the Settlement. They found a charming old warehouse in Borgarnes in West Iceland and started building up two



exhibitions on the brave pioneers who followed their curiosity into the unknown.

Provided with an audio guide available in 15 languages, visitors find themselves in an elaborate labyrinth that displays history in a really exciting way. Step onto a moving boat and get the feeling of how it must have been to cross the ocean in an open boat! Listen to stories, while figures behind the glass silently watch over you. On the lower floor the



exhibition of Saga hero and settler's son, Egill Skallagrímsson, takes you right into the story, with Egill's spirit at your steps.

Transformed through Art

Visual artists from Iceland and abroad contributed their work to both exhibitions, transforming it into a unique experience. Each audio tour takes 30 minutes, leaving the visitor with the deep desire to learn more. The Settlement Center's shop serves as a treasure chest of books on Saga literature, as well as Viking-themed handicrafts and woollen items created by local artists. Take your time to complete your visit with a dinner in the cosy restaurant that catches the atmosphere of the house perfectly and boasts a range of sophisticated Icelandic food at reasonable prices.

-DT/ASF



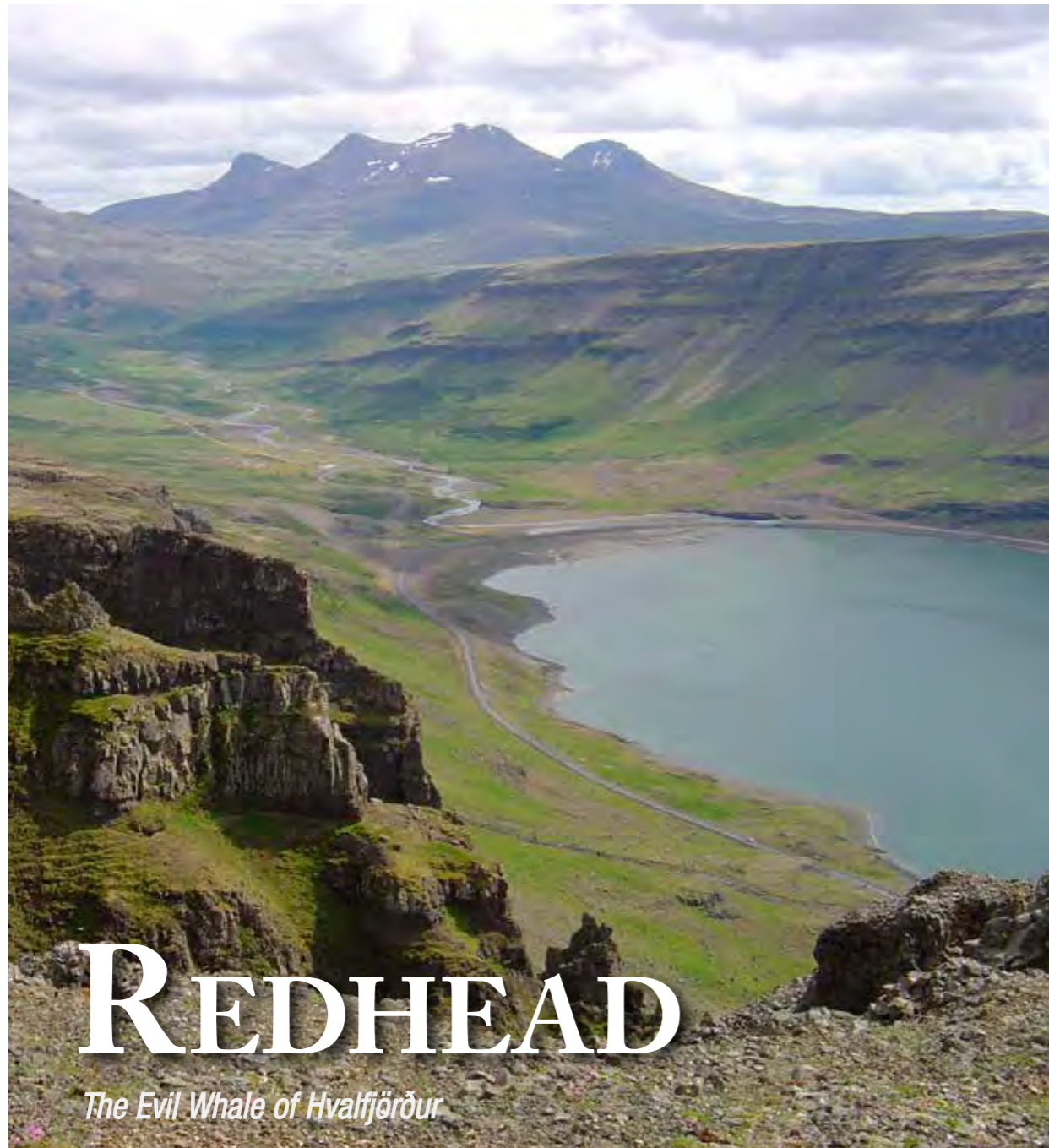
The Settlement Center

Brákarbraut 13-15 • 310 Borgarnes
 +354 437 1600
 landnam@landnam.is
 www.landnam.is





Björn Rúriksson



REDHEAD

The Evil Whale of Hvalfjörður

Hvalfjörður is one of the more spectacular regions through which one passes on the way from Reykjavik to the north or west of Iceland on the Ring Road. Today a tunnel (opened in 1998) leads under its mouth, but it is worth taking the detour around this long and picturesque fjord, especially in fine summer weather. Hvalfjörður (Whale Fjord) cuts into the land from Faxaflói bay, between Akranes

and Kjalarnes. It is about 30 km long, 4–5 km across and 80 m deep at its deepest. In the outer reaches of the fjord there is some lowland, but towards the head of the fjord steep cliffs rise straight from the sea. At its inland end the fjord forks into two branches, Brynjudalsvogur and Botnsvogur. Hvalfjörður is surrounded by splendid mountains, such as Þyrill and Reynivallaháls in the south, and Múlafjall, Hvalfell (Whale Hill) and Botnssúlur at the

head. To the east of Hvalfell is a large lake, Hvalvatn (Whale Lake), which is about 160 m deep. The river Botnsá flows from this lake and cascades down in the Glymur falls, by far Iceland's highest waterfall at 198 m. The origins of the place-names Hvalfjörður, Hvalfell and Hvalvatn (Whale Fjord, Hill and Lake) are explained in an old folk tale:

Once upon a time some men from Suðurnes, on the Reykjanes peninsula, went out to Geirfuglasker (Great Auk Skerry) to catch great auks. When it was time to return to land, one of the men was missing. So the rest of the group of 16 returned home without him, and the man was believed to have died. A year later, however, the same men returned to the skerry and found the man, safe and sound. It transpired that elves had placed a spell on him and kept him with them, treating him well. But he was not happy with the elves, and went ashore with the other men. By now, however, an elf woman was carrying his child and she made him promise to have the child baptised if she brought it to him at church.

Some time later, the man was at mass at Hvalsnes church. A cradle was found outside the church, with a note which read: "The man who is father of this child will make sure that it is baptised." People were astonished, and the pastor suspected that the man who had spent a year on the skerry was probably the father. He pressed the man to acknowledge that he had fathered the child but the man denied it. At that moment a woman appeared, tall and robust. She turned to the man and said: "I cast a spell on you, that you shall become the worst of evil whales in the sea and wreck many ships." Then she seized the cradle and vanished without trace, but people assumed that she must have been the elf woman from Great Auk Skerry, where the man had stayed.

After this the man went mad and took to his heels. He ran to the sea and jumped off the cliff named Hólmsberg, between Keflavík and Leira, where he was instantly transformed into the worst of evil whales; and he was called Redhead, for he had a red cap on his head when he flung himself into the sea. This whale proved a great scourge, and in the end he was

said to have sunk nineteen ships between Seltjarnarnes and Akranes. Thus many people were harmed by him. As time passed, he began to take refuge in the fjord between Kjalarnes and Akranes, and so it came to be known as Hvalfjörður (Whale Fjord).

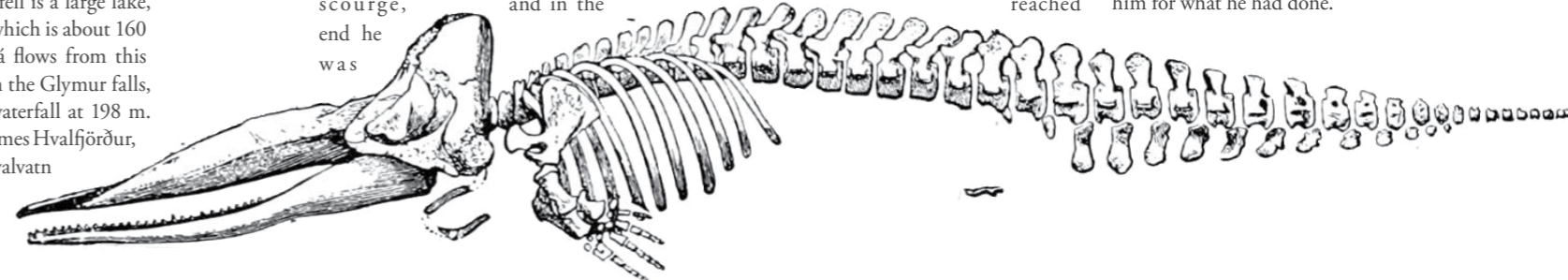
At that time there was a pastor at Saurbær, on the shore of Hvalfjörður, who was both old and blind. He had two sons and one daughter, who were fully grown and very promising. This pastor had supernatural skills. His sons often went out fishing on the fjord. One day they met with Redhead and he drowned them both. The pastor felt the loss of his sons deeply, and one day soon after this he asked his daughter to take him down to the fjord, which was not far from the farm of Saurbær. He took a stick and made his way down to the shore with his daughter's help. Then he stuck his stick into the ground at the tideline and leant forward onto it. He asked his daughter what the sea looked like; she replied that it was mirror-smooth and calm. A little later the pastor asked his daughter again what the sea looked like. Then the girl replied that she could see a black stripe coming up the fjord, like a big shoal of fish. When she told him that the stripe had reached them, the pastor asked her to lead him inland along the shore, and she did so. The stripe kept pace with them, to the head of the fjord.

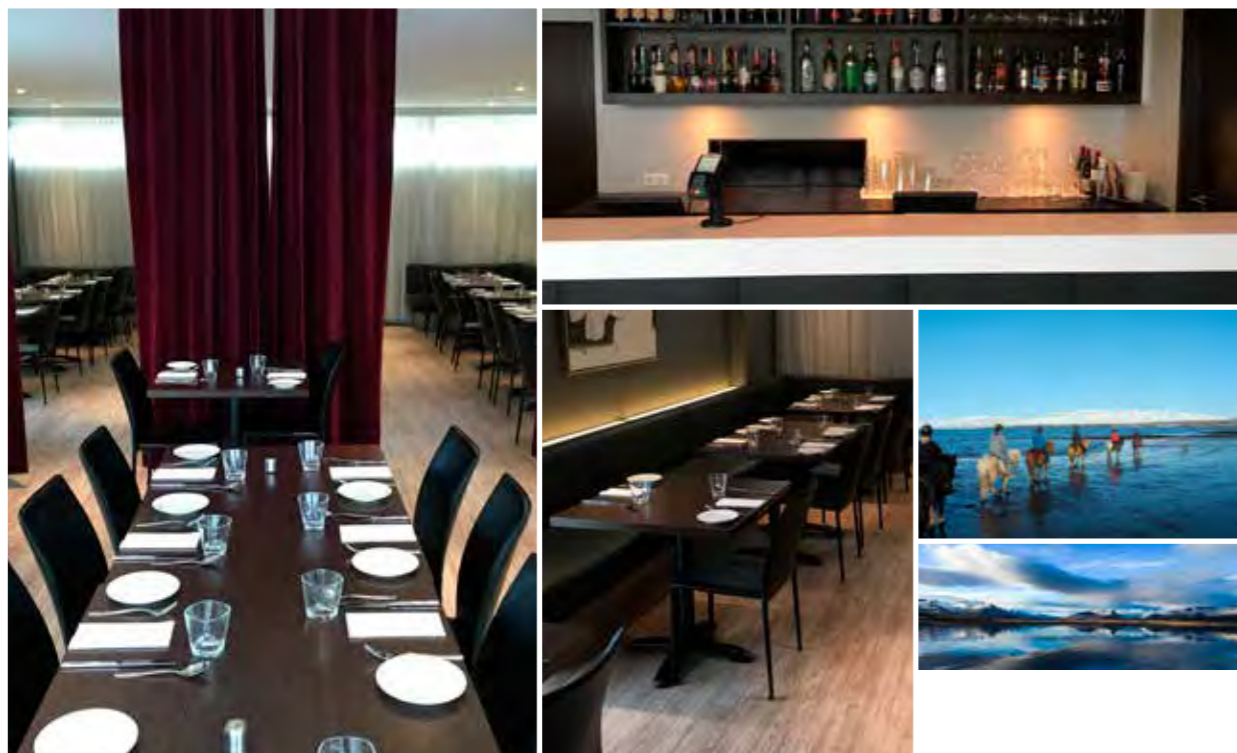
But as the fjord grew shallower, the girl saw that the stripe was the wake of a huge whale, as if he were being led, or driven. At the end of the fjord, at the mouth of the Botnsá river, the pastor asked his daughter to lead him up the western bank of the river. She did so and the old man clambered up the mountainside, while the whale struggled up the river next to them, with great difficulty, since the river was small and the whale big. When the whale reached

the gully where the river cascades down off the heath, there was so little space for him that everything shook as he struggled on. Finally, as he climbed the waterfall, everything around trembled as in the greatest earthquake and the rock made a thunderous roar. This is the origin of the waterfall's name, Glymur (Roaring), and the hills above the

...This pastor had supernatural skills. His sons often went out fishing on the fjord. One day they met with Redhead and he drowned them both. ...

waterfall are known as Skjálíndahæðir (Shaking Hills). But the pastor went resolutely on, and did not stop until he had brought the whale to the lake from which the Botnsá river flows, which has been called Hvalvatn (Whale Lake) ever since. A hill that stands by the lake also derives its name, Hvalfell (Whale Hill), from this event. When Redhead reached the lake, he expired from the strain of climbing there. Nobody has seen him since, but impressive whale bones have been found at the lake and this is deemed to prove that the tale is true. When the pastor had brought the whale up to the lake, he made his way home with his daughter and everybody thanked him for what he had done.





FRESH FOOD IN A HARBOUR TOWN

Just a stone's throw from Reykjavik, there's a lot to see and do in Akranes

West Iceland is known for its hot springs, rivers, black sand beaches, quiet fishing towns, and a glacier, accessible on foot. Just 40 minutes outside Reykjavik, a trip to the west is ideal for those with limited time who want to enjoy some of the countryside.

Travellers who want to visit an authentic, small Icelandic fishing town should spend some time in Akranes. With just 6,900 residents, Akranes is charming, tranquil, and yet has a lot of outdoor activities and a great campsite. After a day, Galito Restaurant is the ideal place to sample fresh, local food, in a warm and cosy atmosphere.

Galito Restaurant

Galito is a favourite among locals and travellers alike. The 13-year old family business focuses on fresh fish, homemade sauces and local ingredients in its inventive, tasty dishes. The chefs buy fresh fish daily and source local, seasonal vegetables whenever possible. Guests can choose from

the restaurant's fine dining menu options such as tender lamb, beef tenderloin, or fresh Icelandic fish such as salmon, catfish and pan-fried cod. Galito also offer a good bistro menu which includes salads, sandwiches, burgers and pizza, along with a good variety of starters and desserts and several healthy dishes such as Naan sandwiches and Jamaican jerk chicken.

In May, Galito begins offering sushi made from fresh salmon, shrimp and tuna, an exciting first for the restaurant. The same owners have operated the restaurant since it opened in 2003 and they are proud to be the top choice among locals.

Outdoor Activities

Akranes really comes alive during the summer. Locals love to spend as much time outside as possible. Visitors can enjoy one of the town's two swimming pools, tee off at the Garðavöllur 18-hole golf course, stroll along the golden sand beach, or rent bicycles to explore the

charming town. Hiking Mount Akrafjall is an easy climb with a spectacular view from the top, especially on clear days when you can see Snæfellsjökull. The mountain can be reached by the road no. 51 and is 11 kilometres east from the town.

Akranes Lighthouse

Akranesviti, the Akranes Lighthouse, is delightful to visit any time of year. Away from bright lights, tourists and town folk catch a display of the Northern Lights dancing in the sky in winter. In the summer, you can see locals picnicking outside the lighthouse, and visitors can climb to the top during opening hours. Built in 1947, the lighthouse has been used to host concerts and art exhibitions in recent years.



Galito
 Stílholt 16-18-300 Akranes
 +354 430 6767
 galito@galito.is
 www.galito.is





TOKENS OF ICELAND: HANDCRAFTED JEWELLERY

Oddný Braga designs timeless pendants inspired by Iceland's nature

Tokens of Iceland is a handmade jewellery line that evokes four distinct Icelandic features—magma, glaciers, auroras, and hot springs. Created and designed by Oddný Braga, Tokens of Iceland is a dynamic brand that is the perfect souvenir from an idyllic Icelandic holiday.



Oddný Braga

Each necklace, with its own unique stone, is handcrafted in the West Iceland town of Borgarnes. The jewellery, which is made with natural mineral pearls wrapped in Sterling Silver, represent the geology and uniqueness of Iceland. The Magma below the ground, the Glaciers shaping the land, the Aurora Borealis lighting up the sky and the Hot Springs boiling below the very rocks we walk upon.

Molten Magma

Iceland is a volcanic island constantly in flux, with magma breaking through fissures and periodic eruptions that reshape the rocky landscape. Iceland's land is made up of igneous rock, most of which is basalt, which forms from cooling magma. Most of Iceland's volcanoes are fissures, like the 2014 Holuhraun eruption, where lava pours out of the cracks

in the earth's crust. Holuhraun produced fountains of lava shooting out of the earth. Oddný created the Magma pendant to reflect the fire-like intensity of the eruptions and the cooling magma left behind.

Gorgeous Glaciers

Like the air, Iceland's water is perfectly pure and that could, in part, be credited to the island nation's vast glaciers. Ice covers about 11% of the country, mostly in the form of Iceland's largest glaciers, Vatnajökull, Hofsjökull, Langjökull and Mýrdalsjökull. Travellers love to explore the icy expanses by hiking, snowmobiling and even visiting ice caves. The Glacier pendant has a pure, crystal clear feeling that reminds us of Iceland's gorgeous glaciers.

Haunting Aurora Borealis

The biggest winter attraction in Iceland is the Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis). People travel from around the world to catch a glimpse of the green, white, blue and red lights dancing in the night sky. Tokens of Iceland offer a striking green

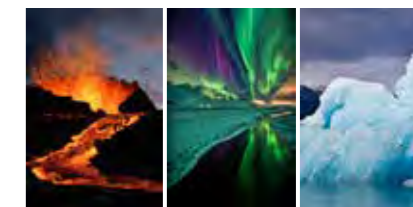
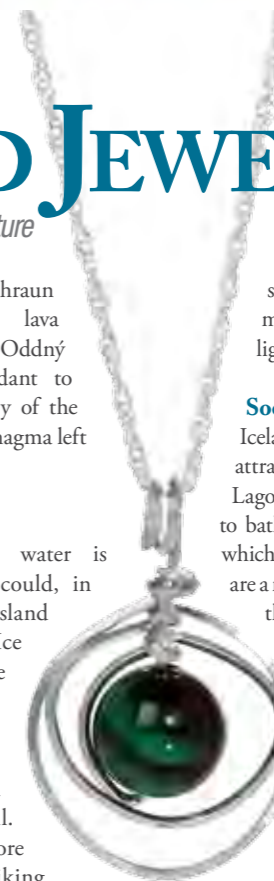
stone pendant that represents the movement of the dancing green lights.

Soothing Hot Springs

Iceland's waters also serve as tourist attractions. The man-made Blue Lagoon near Grindavík allows visitors to bathe in geothermally heated water, which soothes and heals the skin. There are a number of hot springs throughout the country that locals and tourists enjoy. Tokens of Iceland's blue Hot Springs pendant captures the striking blue colour of the Blue Lagoon. Tokens of Iceland pieces can be purchased at Kristý Borgarnesi and are also available online at:

www.tokensoficeiland.is

-JG





Tokens of Iceland
 Kristý - Borgarbraut 58-60 - 310 Borgarnes
 +354 437 2001
 kristy@simnet.is
 www.tokensoficeiland.is





INVENTIVE FOOD AT OK BISTRO

Stop by this cosy restaurant on your trip to the west

Borgarnes is a picturesque town, considered the gateway to the west and home to beautiful nature, fascinating exhibitions and a rich literary history. Travelling on the ring road, the town is reached by one of the longest bridges on the island.

Numerous activities keep travellers quite busy. Fans of the Sagas will want to visit the town and its Settlement Center, as much of Egils Saga takes place in the region. Film buffs may recognise Borgarnes from scenes in Ben Stiller's 2013 movie, 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty'.

Just a 75-minute drive from Reykjavik, travellers should plan to spend some time in Borgarnes to explore and after a long day, stop by the charming Ok Bistro restaurant, which serves classic and creative dishes to satisfy everyone's tastes.

Glacier history

Ok Bistro takes its name from the Ok glacier in Borgarfjörður which has been known as the smallest



glacier in Iceland for centuries. In the last couple of decades, it has retreated steadily and in 2014, Icelandic geologists removed Ok's glacier status. However, Ok mountain still stands tall at an impressive 1200m high to the west of the much larger Langjökull glacier.

Tasty dishes

The restaurant offers a friendly atmosphere with an accommodating wait staff, but the food is the main event. The chefs have perfected the menu with fresh fish, an array of meats, and inventive small courses and appetizers. Guests

will find mouth-watering seafood options including pan-fried arctic char, garlic roasted lobster, deep-fried plaice, and oven roasted fresh cod. Meat eaters will rejoice in a glorious menu of roasted breast of duck, grilled beef pepper steak, saffron marinated chicken, and local organic lamb. There are a diverse number of small dishes that will be difficult to choose from, as they are all delicious. For instance, local mussels, lobster tempura, and grilled minke whale are on the small course menu, and appetizers include the delectable liquorice lamb, pan-fried scallops, and creamy lobster soup.

Borgarnes is a lovely town to visit any time of year, whether you're just passing through, on a day trip, or a longer stay. Whatever you're doing, don't miss the opportunity to stop by Ok Bistro to dine on some of the most delicious dishes in the region. -JG



OK Bistro
 Digranesgötu 2 • 310 Borgarnes
 +354 437 1200
 okbistro@okbistro.is
 www.okbistro.is

MASTER OF COLOUR

Harry Bilson creates joyful, colourful paintings inspired by nature

Iceland is an idyllic place to create for many artists, with its striking landscape and quirky culture that lends to endless inspiration. Natural wonders include active volcanoes, gurgling geysers and vast glaciers, while there always seem to be a colourful cast of characters among Iceland's 330,000 inhabitants.

Harry Bilson, the artist who was born in Reykjavik in 1948 to an Icelandic mother and British father and who grew up in London, now calls Iceland home.

Harry is a master of colour whether he's capturing the dark subtleties of Icelandic life or the gentle power of the 'Bower Bird Lady'. Nature is a theme never far from his paintings and prints, such as the 'Last Leaf Leaving' painting that features a family in a barren Icelandic forest with a gorgeous blue owl soaring above. The contrast of colours and brushwork is beautiful.

Lifelong painter

Harry began painting at an early age as he was a highly creative child. His talent was recognized immediately and at the age of six, he won an international Exhibition of Children's Art competition in Prague. At the age of 19 he became a full-time professional, one who was self-taught, self-propelled and completely self-supported. He has painted ever since, honing his craft and finding inspiration around the world.

International Artist

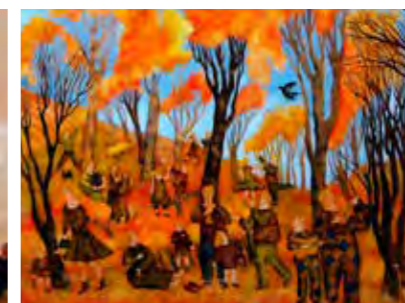
He has lived and worked in several countries, including Australia, China, USA, Canada



and Ireland but he now happily resides in Iceland. Harry has shown his work in numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world, including the US, South America, Japan, Australia and Europe. He continues to travel and exhibit worldwide.

Those interested in purchasing Harry's works should email him at harrybilson@googlemail.com or visit Galleri Fold close to the Hlemmur bus station while in Reykjavik.

-JG



LJÓMALIND FARMER'S MARKET

Not to Be Missed! - Authentic Icelandic Products

Ljómalind Farmer's Market specialises in exclusive regional products. Small batch production of items such as traditional skyr from a local creamery, fresh farm eggs, dried fish, grass-fed beef and smoked salmon from local producers ensure top quality products. Sugar free chocolate candies, skyr confect, jams, ice cream and a variety of handcrafts and woolen knitwear, make unique gifts or snacks for the road. Unlike the big supermarkets, small production sometimes means limited quantities so you never know what you will find on offer at the market, which makes the



experience all the more exciting. Open year round including bank holidays.

Open every day as follows:

Winter opening hours: From 1.00pm to 6.00 pm. Summer opening hours: From 11.00am to 6.00pm.

Location: beside the Borgarnes Tourist Information Office. -EMV

Ljómalind Farmers Market
 Brúartorg 4 • 310 Borgarnes
 +354 437 1400
 ljomalind@ljomalind.is
 www.ljomalind.is



WELCOME TO AKRANES

Spend some quality time in this tranquil west coast town

Many travellers who visit Akranes are in no hurry to leave and there are a couple of guesthouses that are perfect for any length of stay.

Kirkjuhovoll Guesthouse is a comfortable 8-room guesthouse, housed in a classic, historic building. The rooms are airy, with a lot of light and the owners offer guests the opportunity to borrow tandem bicycles to explore this lovely town.

In addition, the Apotek Hostel & Guesthouse is located in a house that used to serve as the town's pharmacy. The rooms

are tastefully furnished and are close to the town square. The owners also offer accommodation during the summer in the high school dormitory, which is a great option for the budget traveller.

Just a short drive from Reykjavik, Akranes is the first detour for those looking to explore the charming west coast before continuing on to Snæfellsnes. A town of 6,900 people, Akranes is a classic fishing village that also has deep industrial roots. It's peaceful, friendly and home to a beautiful beach, a quaint folk museum and

a lighthouse that is open regularly to visitors, offering great views from the top.

For hikers, Mount Akrafjall is the pride and joy of the town and it's known as a relatively easy climb. The views from its peak are breath-taking, especially on clear days, when you can see the Snæfellsjökull glacier. -JG

Stay Akranes
 Merkiþétt 7 • 300 Akranes
 Suðurgata 32 • 300 Akranes
 +354 868 3332
 www.stayakranes.is

A PASSION FOR ICELAND

Iceland Guided Tours

There was a time when I thought independent travel was the only way to travel. Organised tours are for sissies, I thought. Guidebook in hand, I would do it my way. After a tour with Iceland Guided Tours I had to change my tune quite drastically as I came to the realisation that even the best guidebooks to Iceland can only scratch the surface of a country that has been quietly churning out more documented history, primarily in the form of Sagas for over 1,000 years.

Storytellers Par Excellence

Like all of Iceland Guided Tours' guides, Helgi Davidsson knows Icelandic history and those Sagas well and is full of stories and anecdotes that bring his tours to life. "Iceland has a particularly rich history that has been well documented since at least 930 when the Settlement Period began. Being able to draw from this wealth of information is what sets us apart from many others and in this way our tours really come alive", Helgi explains.

A magical mystical tour

One of Iceland Guided Tours newest tours is a day trip to Snæfellsnes National Park in West



Iceland. The tour takes you right around this mystical peninsula with its very own glacier-capped active volcano, Snæfellsjökull. Several of the most well known sites on the peninsula also happen to be quite unique to the island. Take Arnastapi for instance; a popular spot on the peninsula's south coast where lava from a long ago eruption came oozing its way right down to the edge of the sea, creating three unusual circular formations known as 'blow-holes'. Here, on windy days (read: almost daily), waves crash spectacularly inside them, making for a very impressive sight.

Snæfellsnes is also home to some of Iceland's most extraordinary citizens; a 17th century serial killer, a well-travelled Viking woman who married Leif Eriksson's younger brother, and a half-man, half-troll, Bárður Snæfellsás, who is thought to be the guardian

spirit of the peninsula. These are just some of the intriguing personalities, found only on Snæfellsnes Peninsula, whom Iceland Guided Tours will fill you in on.

Small groups and personal service

With a fleet of modern minibuses that take no more than 18 passengers at a time, Iceland Guided Tours specialises in small groups and personalised service at very reasonable prices. And with one of Iceland Guided Tours ultra-knowledgeable guides at your service, you may just want to leave your guide books at home!

-EMV

Iceland Guided Tours
 Suðurlandsbraut 32 • 108 Reykjavík
 +354 556 5566
 info@igtours.is
 www.igtours.is



EVERYTHING VOLCANIC

World-renowned volcanologist, Haraldur Sigurðsson, creates Iceland's most comprehensive volcano museum

Snæfellsnes is considered the jewel of the west coast, in part, because the region has a taste of everything Icelandic. If you're looking for mountains, they're there. If you want to attempt a glacier walk, Snæfellsnesjökull awaits. If you're interested in volcanoes, Eldfjallasafn Volcano Museum in Stykkishólmur is the place to visit. The museum showcases works of art, old and new, which depict volcanic eruptions, as well as artefacts, and volcanic rocks. The museum focuses on volcanoes around the world.

Volcanic hot spot

Iceland has a high concentration of active volcanoes due to its location on the divergent tectonic plate boundary



of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, and also because it sits over a geological hot spot. The island has 30 active volcanic systems, of which 13 have erupted since the settlement of Iceland in 874 AD. The most recent eruptions occurred in 2014 at Holuhraun near the Bárðarbunga system and the eruption under



Eyjafjallajökull in 2010 that produced an enormous ash cloud.

Riveting museum

Diverse aspects of volcanoes are presented at the Volcano Museum, from the science, geology and their environmental effects to how they appear in art and literature. Talks



are given daily in the museum in English and Icelandic about volcanoes and their effects, as well as information on geology for people with little or no previous knowledge of volcanoes. For visitors who would like an in-depth tour of the geology behind volcanoes, the museum offers geology excursions that visit a number of dramatic locations along the Snæfellsnes Peninsula.

Passionate curator

The world-renowned volcanologist Haraldur Sigurðsson created the Volcano Museum to share the wealth of knowledge he has accrued. Haraldur was born in Stykkishólmur in 1939, completed a BSc degree at Queens University in Belfast in 1965, and received his PhD from Durham University in England



in 1970. He worked at the University of the West Indies from 1970, conducting research on Caribbean volcanoes. He served as professor of volcanology at the University of Rhode Island for 40 years. His research has been principally in volcanology, both on land and on the ocean floor. He has worked in Indonesia, Italy, West Indies, USA, West Africa, Greece, South and Central America and elsewhere, but Iceland remains firmly his home where the Volcano Museum is close to his heart. -JG

Volcano Museum Stykkishólmur
 Aðalgate 6 • 340 Stykkishólmur
 +354 433 8154
 safn@eldfjallasafn.is
 www.eldfjallasafn.is



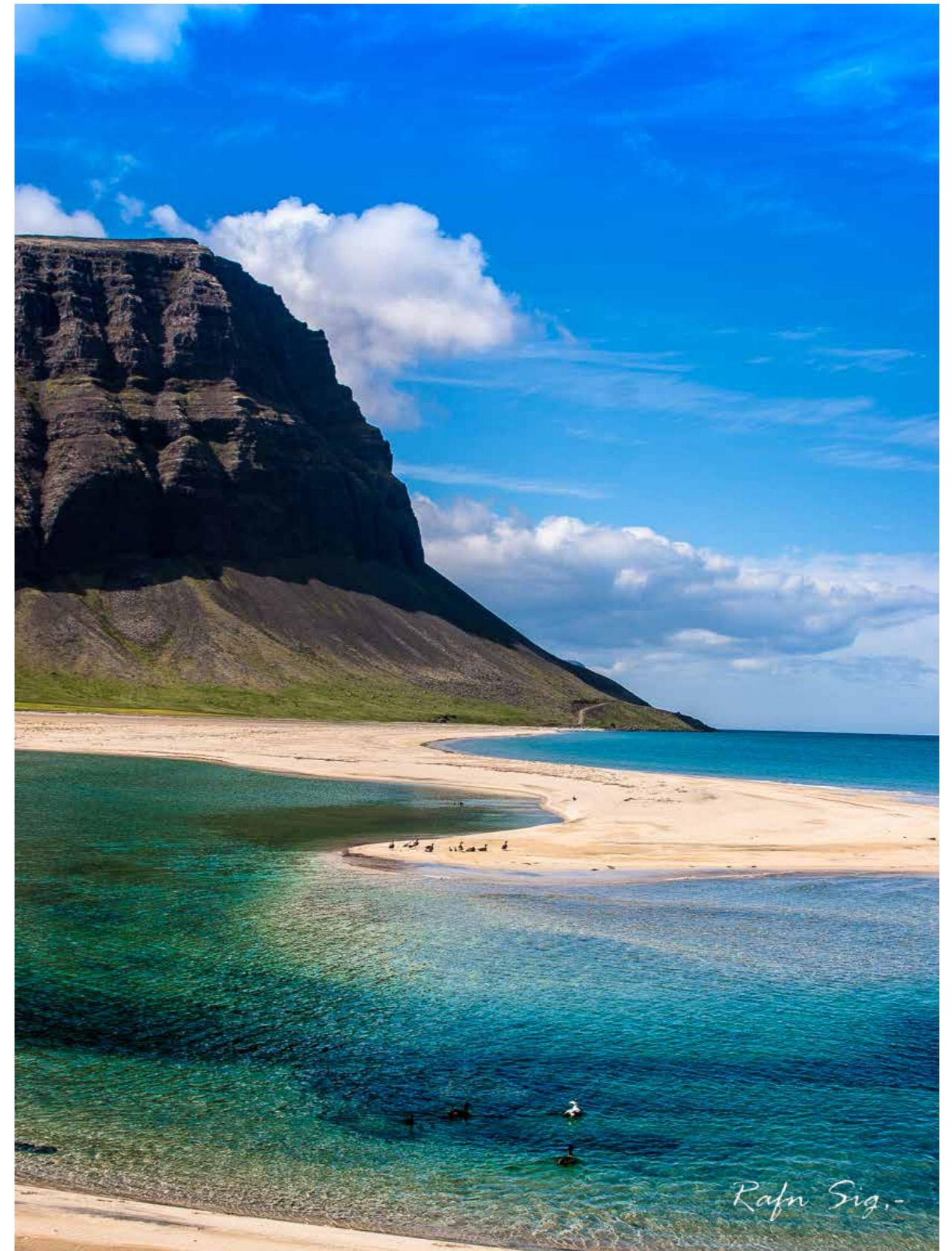
WESTFJORDS *Iceland*



#WESTFJORDS

The 'Lonely Planet' guide put Westfjords on its list of the top 10 regions of the world to visit in 2011 and the area won a 'European Destination of Excellence' (EDEN) award. A very sparsely populated region of Iceland, it is home to the Arctic fox, a dizzying variety of birdlife and nature that is simply breathtaking. With precipitous cliffs that plunge almost

vertically to the deep blue seas below, its multitude of beautiful fjords, its hot springs, pure streams and waterfalls, it's a place for the nature-lover to be awed by its silence and tranquility, pierced only by the birds. The mystical Breiðafjörður bay, with its countless islands is home to all kinds of sea life and tours out into the bay will visit islands covered in birds, with some offering sea fishing.



Rafn Sig.

GO WEST!

Air Iceland is opening up the Westfjords



Air Iceland offers twice-daily flights to Ísafjörður, the unofficial capital of the Westfjords. The Westfjords have some of the best nature in Iceland. There are endless coastlines, steep bird cliffs, and gorgeous mountainous landscapes that await those that make the trip.

Ísafjörður, which is home to about 4,000 people, is the ideal place for tourists to base from when exploring the region. Given the small size of this remote town, you could feel a bit isolated, but that's just the feeling many tourists relish. The town itself is quaint, with shops and restaurants in the small downtown area while the mountains offer a picturesque backdrop to the bustling harbour. Take a short drive out of town and you'll find fascinating rock formations amongst towering mountain ranges—and more sheep than people.

Air Iceland's two daily flights leave from the Reykjavik domestic airport to Ísafjörður. The experienced and professional staff take great pride in providing travellers a seamless and convenient travel experience with friendly service.



Exciting Westfjords day tours

Air Iceland partners with several tour operators around the country and offers three different day tours to the Westfjords, including the flight from Reykjavik to Ísafjörður.

The 'Ísafjörður Day Tour', available all year round, gives travellers a taste of the local nature, history and food in the Westfjords. The tour begins with a trip to the oldest fishing station in Iceland, Ósvör Bolungarvík, before heading to the Maritime Museum in Ísafjörður. The afternoon is spent exploring the surroundings and nature of Ísafjörður followed by a visit to the eco-friendly



fishing village of Suðureyri to enjoy some fresh, local fish. The second tour, 'Dynjandi & the Westfjords', takes travellers to Dynjandi, where guests can take a hike up to the top tier of this majestic waterfall. Dynjandi is one of the most impressive and beautiful waterfalls in the Westfjords. Additionally, guests get to see the spectacular Önundarfjörður, Dýrafjörður and Arnarfjörður fjords, offering jaw-dropping views. This tour, which is available from 1st May—31st October, also stops at the golden sand beach at Holt and the cosy Þingeyri (Thingeyri) fishing village and gives travellers the opportunity to explore Ísafjörður on their own.



The third tour takes you to some of the most isolated and beautiful parts of the Westfjords. The 'Under the Westfjords' tour starts with a circle around the Svalvogar peninsula, which is remote and off the beaten path. You will be in awe as you follow the rugged coast, hiking to see the dramatic cliffs, calm creeks, rich birdlife and colourful mountains. You might have a chance to see arctic foxes, seals and whales, as well as a lot of roaming sheep. The tour is available from 1st June—30th September.

Gorgeous Greenland

Air Iceland also flies to our close Nordic neighbours, the Faroe Islands and Greenland, in addition to its domestic flights around Iceland. In fact, in June 2016, Air Iceland is adding a new gateway to Greenland at Kangerlussuaq on the west coast. Kangerlussuaq means 'big fjord', and they mean it—the fjord is 170km long and, at its halfway point, is crossed by the Arctic Circle.

The main event for many travellers is seeing the Greenland Ice Cap, which is easily accessible from Kangerlussuaq. The Ice Cap is a true wonder of the world as the glacier edge calves into roaring river rapids below, leaving a choppy face of ice in its place. In addition to exploring the remarkable Ice Cap, a local tour operator



runs a number of excursions, including trips to see local wildlife, such as arctic foxes, reindeer, oxen, falcons, eagles and ravens, as well as boat trips, horse riding, guided hikes, sightseeing flights and a

visit to the US military museum. Besides Ísafjörður and Kangerlussuaq, Air Iceland flies travellers to Grimsey in the north to cross the Arctic Circle, to Akureyri, the capital of the north, Egilsstaðir, in the east, to explore the vast and breathtaking East Fjords, as well as Vopnafjörður and Þórshöfn (Thorshofn), both in the east. Air Iceland also flies to Kulusuk, Nuuk Ilulissat, Narsarsuaq, and Ittoqqortoormiit in Greenland.

Air Iceland is ready to accommodate you, whether you are a flying for business or leisure. The warm, capable and friendly staff are ready to welcome you and make your dream trip come true.

-JG



Flugfélag Íslands - Air Iceland
 Reykjavíkflugvöllur • 101 Reykjavík
 +354 570 3000
www.airiceland.is





SIBLINGS & SORCERY

Þjóðólfur and Þuríður the Strait-filler in beautiful Bolungarvík

Bolungarvík is a thriving fishing town in the outer reaches of Ísafjarðardjúp, on the western shore. The community received its town charter in 1974 and the population is now more than 1,200. The bay (Icelandic: vík), from which the name of the town is derived, faces northeast and stretches from Óshyma in the south to Traðarhyma in the north. To the west of Bolungarvík is Stigahlíð, where steep slopes and cliffs make the terrain hard to traverse. Two grassy valleys lead back from the bay, with Mt. Emir above. At the mouth of these valleys stands the estate and church site of Hóll, formerly an important manor. The landscape of Bolungarvík is spectacular,

with abundant vegetation in some areas, and there is an impressive view across Ísafjarðardjúp to Grænahlíðar, Jökulfirðir, Vébjarnarnúpur and Snæfjallaströnd.

Bolungarvík is believed to have been a seasonal fishing centre from the earliest days of Iceland's history, thanks to its proximity to rich fishing grounds. In times past, fishermen's huts stood there in clusters, but permanent habitation did not develop for a long time. It was only after Bolungarvík became a trading post in 1890 that people began to settle there permanently. The hamlet was licensed as a trading centre in 1903, and in 1911 harbour construction commenced. The local economy has been

largely based on the fishing and fish-processing industries, although there have also been other enterprises. While today's fisheries employ state-of-the-art technology,

Bolungarvík also offers the opportunity to learn about the old ways: a replica of an old fishing station has been built at Ósvör, showing how fishermen lived and worked in the days of the rowing boat. Reconstructions of a fishermen's shelter, fish-drying shack and salting shack have been built, along with other items connected with fishing in the past. At nearby Gil in Syðridalur, where lignite (brown coal) was mined for fuel in 1917-21, traces can be seen of old mine-workings.

In the past, Bolungarvík was isolated and difficult to reach except by sea. The community became more accessible when the Hnífsdalurísafjörður road via Óshlíð was opened in 1950. This road, however, is a hazardous one, due to the risk of falling rock and avalanches from the slopes above, and it is constantly being repaired and improved.

Another road leads from Bolungarvík via Skálavíkurheiði to Skálavík, a community which is now only inhabited in summer. Skálavík has a long and interesting geological history: some of Iceland's oldest rock strata have been found there, dating back 15-16 million years.

“...she was so angry that she cast a spell upon him, that he should be turned into a rock...”

Landnámabók (the Book of Settlements) tells of Þuríður sundafyllir and Völu-Steinn, her son, who came from northern Norway and settled at Bolungarvík. Þuríður had remarkable powers, and it is said that before she left Norway, during a time of famine, she cast a spell that filled all the straits with fish, hence her sobriquet sundafyllir (Strait-filler). The following folk tale tells of her relations with her brother Þjóðólfur.

The Hólsá river rises in the Tungudalur valley in Bolungarvík and flows a short distance before reaching the sea in the middle of the bay. At the top of the bay, north of the river, is a farm with fine buildings, which some say was named Þjóðólfstunga. For Þuríður the Strait-filler had a brother named Þjóðólfur. He asked Þuríður to give him a piece of land at Bolungarvík, and she allowed him as much land as he could fence in a day. He set off and built a wall from Stigi, intending to fence off Hlíðardalur and Tungudalur, but got no farther than the middle of Tungudalur that day. Traces of the wall can still be seen. Þjóðólfur laid claim to both valleys, but Þuríður claimed she owned the valley that was not fully fenced off, and she expected him to submit.

Þjóðólfur was very displeased and wished to avenge himself by stealing an ox that Þuríður kept at Stigahlíð. She noticed him there and chased after him, but he took the beast and tried to lead it home.

They met at Ófæra. She immediately fell upon him and tried to take the beast away, but without success. Now she was so angry that she cast a spell upon him, that he should be turned into a rock in a place where multitudes of birds would leave their droppings. He retorted that she should become a rock in the place where the strongest winds blew - and since then she has stood at the top of the northern point of Óshlíð, as may clearly be seen.

As for Þjóðólfur, he turned to stone and fell down into the sea, where he landed on a rock that stood out of the water. The rock was generally clustered with birds and was called Þjóðólfur. This rock remained there until the autumn of 1936, when it vanished in calm weather one night, leaving no trace.

The people of Bolungarvík remembered Þjóðólfur for a long time and knew exactly where it had been, as it had stood alone and they passed it every time they went to sea.

They say that the sea is so shallow there that the rock could not lie in the sea without being seen. And so they believe that the rock vanished because the spell had reached the end of its term.

Traces of where Þjóðólfur stood are clearly visible on the skerry: the rock was over five fathoms across at the base. And this is the end of the story of the siblings Þjóðólfur and Þuríður the Strait-filler, and their fate.



NORTH *Iceland*

Summer in the North is characterised by the midnight sun. You can play golf, go seal and whale watching, horse riding, hiking, swimming, fishing, river rafting, bird-watching, camping or simply enjoy the disparate forms of nature. The region wears a different coat in winter, when you can ride horses on the frozen lakes in Mývatn under the Northern Lights or ski the slopes just minutes from Akureyri town centre. Northern Iceland is probably Iceland's most diverse region—in every sphere. Nature varies from the mystical area around Mývatn Lake, a birdwatching paradise, to the awesome horse-shoe canyon of Ásbyrgi, the thunderous waterfalls at Goðafoss and Dettifoss, Askja's calderas and volcanoes, or

islands like Drangey, to name a few. The region is bursting with vibrant history, just waiting to be enjoyed. Museums are found in almost every town, with fascinating insights into fields such as the seals at Selasetur in Hvammstangi or the Whale Museum in Húsavík to the turf house of Glaumbær farm in Skagaströnd, home to the Museum of Prophecies is known as the country music capital of Iceland. In Hjaltadal valley in Skagafjörður stands Hólar, formerly the episcopal see and site of Iceland's first printing press. Siglufjörður hosts the Folk Music and Herring museums. Blönduós has several museums, as does Akureyri, the largest town of the north, along with its art galleries and rich culture.



#NORTHICELAND



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ICELAND'S WHALE POPULATION IS CHANGING

Researchers find significant change in whale numbers in Iceland's waters

The whale populations around Iceland are changing in both location and size, and some researchers attribute the changes to rising sea temperatures. Whales are a familiar presence and cetaceans are important predators in Icelandic waters with a total of 23 species recorded of which 12–14 species are considered regular inhabitants.

The different species that have been seen off the coasts of the island include blue, fin, minke, pilot, humpback, sei, orca, sperm, bottlenose, beluga, and narwhal whales as well as white-beaked dolphins, white-sided dolphins and harbour porpoises.

Dramatic changes

Researchers have monitored the distribution and abundance of cetaceans in the Central and Eastern North Atlantic regularly for nearly 30 years. They have been studying the changes in their distribution and abundance around Iceland—and the changes are significant.

There have been some changes among baleen whale numbers. Over the past 30 years, some stocks have grown, others have decreased, and others have moved to different waters. In fact, significant changes in the distribution and abundance of several whale species have

occurred in the North Atlantic during this time period. The abundance of humpback and fin whales has increased from just 1,800 to 11,600 and 15,200 to 20,600, respectively, in the period 1987–2007. Fin whales and humpbacks have increased in number since 1987, when more exact counting of their numbers began. At the same time, blue whales have moved into more northern waters, which is attributable to warming sea temperatures further south. In contrast, the abundance of minke whales along Iceland's coasts has decreased rather dramatically from around 44,000 in 2001 to 20,000 in 2007 and just 10,000 in 2009.



Physical variables affecting numbers

The physical variables impacting cetacean numbers include ocean temperature, depth and salinity. The increase in fin whale abundance was accompanied by the expansion of their distribution into the deep, vast waters of the Irminger Sea. The distribution of the endangered blue whale has shifted north during this period. The habitat selection of fin whales was analysed with respect to physical variables, and the results suggest that their abundance was influenced by an

interaction between the physical variables of depth and distance, but also by the sea surface temperature and height. However, the changes in cetacean distribution and abundance may also be a response to their food supplies, as capelin populations move further north and the sand eel population has collapsed.

Minke whales

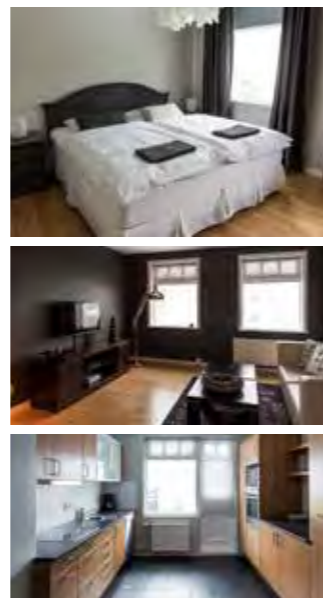
The estimates of minke whales from 1987–2009 around Iceland varied widely. Their numbers increased appreciably between

1987 and 2001. However, the survey in 2007 revealed a reduction in minke whale abundance to less than half that of 2001 and an extra aerial survey conducted in 2009 showed even further decline in numbers. Thus, the decrease in common minke whale abundance in the Icelandic continental shelf area seems to be related to the decrease in the abundance of their preferred prey species, sand eel in the southern part and capelin in the northern part. The trend is concerning.

Reasons for change

Significant oceanographic changes have occurred in Icelandic waters since the mid-1990s, including a rise in ocean water temperature. Although the exact causes remain unclear, these changes appear to have caused a northward shift in the distribution of several fish species, a decrease in krill numbers and a total collapse in the sand eel population off the coasts of Iceland. Considerable changes in distribution and abundance of several whale species are apparent from the series of cetacean surveys dating back to 1986.





Acco AKUREYRI

- In the heart of Town

Akureyri, known as the capital of the North, is a charming and tightly knit community with a population that barely surpasses 18,000



Helga Björk Eiríksdóttir

residents at the last count. In spite of its small size, the town centre boasts a surprisingly wide variety of shops, cafés, fine-dining restaurants, art galleries and musical happenings, all within a very small radius and within walking distance of one of Akureyri's latest additions in accommodation, aptly named, Acco.

A warm and welcoming place to stay

Owner Helga Björk Eiríksdóttir goes to great lengths to make sure things are running smoothly and guests are well cared for. "We are a family-run operation and want to offer something for everyone, so our accommodation options are as different as they are many. Most of our apartments and rooms have just been recently renovated in a modern Scandinavian style. Spacious and relaxing are two keywords that describe our concept, so that guests can really enjoy their stay."



Convenience, comfort and style

Located right on the town square in the city centre, Acco offers a range of options including eight roomy, fully furnished apartments in varying styles. One- to four-bedroom apartments are available as well as a 2-bedroom superior apartment with its outstanding contemporary décor and attention to detail, such as bathrobes, blackout curtains, washer and dryer, and a fully equipped kitchen with everything you need to stay in style.

"Our guests are out all day long exploring the stunning land and seascapes as well as the countryside that surrounds Akureyri.

We want them to come back to a warm and welcoming place and to experience it as their home away from home", says Helga Björk.

Catering to every budget

Acco's moderately priced guesthouse has 13 rooms in various sizes and formats, some with private and some with shared bath, and an adjoining separate communal kitchen for those who wish to do their own cooking. If you are travelling on a shoestring, Acco offers a neat and clean hostel with bunk beds, shared bathrooms and its own communal kitchen.

On the ground floor, the welcoming and friendly Café Berlin, with its bistro-style menu offers delicious, light and fresh meals for breakfast and lunch. Start your morning off right with a cup of Café Berlin's excellent coffee and celebrate your successful day of sightseeing when you return with a round of drinks. Skál!

-EMV

Acco Accommodation
 Skipagata 4 • 600 Akureyri
 +354 547 2226
 info@acco.is
 www.acco.is



Rafn Sig.

Grímsøy is a beautiful, wind-swept, secluded island, situated just 40km off the coast of North Iceland. The island is about 5 square kilometres in area and just 100 people live there. The inhabitants come from hardy stock, battling arctic temperatures and isolation. Tourists come to explore the tiny island, hike, birdwatch, and experience 24 hours of daylight in the height of the summer. Night does not reach Grímsøy until late July when the sun sets around midnight, only to rise a short time later.



backdrop when photographing the birds. And birdwatchers are in for a treat, as the island is home to a diverse mix of seabirds.

Remote, Unspoiled Nature

Travellers marvel at the cliffs on the east side of the island, which, at their highest, tower to 100 metres. In the old days, the basalt cliffs served as a major source of food as locals collected eggs along the rifts. Today, the egg collection practice is safer and more modern, but the cliffs are a reminder of the past and the importance they played in feed the island's population. Their formations are also interesting and serve as a great

Crossing the Arctic Circle

Grímsøy is the ideal place to witness the midnight sun. That's when the sun remains above the horizon for a full 24 hours during the summer solstice on 21st June. Grímsøy is one of the best places you can experience this phenomenon in Iceland: where the Arctic Circle crosses the country's northernmost point. Travellers love to walk over a symbolic bridge to cross the Arctic Circle, which can be found at 66°33'N, just

north of Grímsøy's airport terminal. Next to the bridge is a signpost, showing the distances to many well-known cities in the world, including London and New York. Tourists who make the pilgrimage receive proof of their trip in the form of a diploma when flying with Norlandair.

Convenient, Professional Service

Norlandair offers daily flights to Grímsøy from Akureyri, as well as flights to Þórshöfn, Vopnafjörður, and Constable Point in the east of Greenland, which services the town of Ittoqqortoormiit. Norlandair offers a range of aviation services for travellers who are looking for private air travel, charter flights, or scheduled flights to Greenland. The Norlandair team has decades of experience in arctic aviation and arctic travel, and is ready to accommodate travellers' needs. -JG



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THE WHALES OF AKUREYRI

On tour with Ambassadors Specialised Whale-Watching Ships

In their fourth year of scheduled tours, the Ambassadors whale-watching ships offer cruising through prime whale viewing areas in first class comfort on board. Departing daily, starting at 9:00 am, from Torfunefsbryggja harbour right in the heart of Akureyri - next to the Hof cultural house.

The Whales' Home

At the fringe of the Arctic Circle, Akureyri is an area of outstanding natural beauty and home to all the species of whales found around the country. Dramatic landscapes, rich history and the wealth of species that choose to make it their home should place it on the „bucket list” list of anybody with an interest in the natural world.

Eyjafjörður, particularly, is home to Humpback Whales—gigantic animals that love singing and slapping their fins and tails! It is beautiful to watch these magnificent creatures jump up out of the ocean! Additionally, Minke Whales, Dolphins, Harbour Porpoises and Blue Whales are seen in the fjord.

Sailing with the Ambassador Boats

As the name Ambassador refers to its function of connecting whales and humans,



it has great viewing facilities to do just that. Custom built for whale watching, the Ambassadors fast, stable and safe boats are led by professional guides that help to enrich their guests knowledge and understanding of the fjord's ecosystem, geology, history and folklore. Tours take roughly three hours, and being protected from winds and weather by the mountains, ensures that it's calmer than the open sea. Depending on the season there are number of departures per day.

Tour Fact Sheet and Reviews

- Different whale watching platforms.
- 360° panorama from top deck.
- Commentary through on board sound-system.

- Heated indoor cabin with toilet facilities.
- Comfortable cushioned seats, tables and ample space.
- Light snacks, sandwiches, coffee, beer and soft drinks available on board.

While Ambassador tours seem like the perfect day-tours, the reviews on their website are a confirmation of that. In general, the customers feelings are like this; *“It was very impressive. I really did not expect to see that many whales! I recommend this tour to everybody.”*

- NNH/ASF



Ambassador
Torfunefsbryggja Harbour • 600 Akureyri
+354 462 6800
✉ info@ambassador.is
www.ambassador.is





THE KLONDIKE OF THE ATLANTIC

Siglufjörður remembers its Golden Age

Siglufjörður is a small fishing town on the north coast of Iceland, about an hour's drive from Akureyri (sometimes referred to as the Capital of North Iceland). The town, which is a part of the Fjallabyggð municipality, is flanked by rugged mountains and blessed with a history that is quite literally rich. The town was once nicknamed the Klondike of the Atlantic—a reference to the famous gold producing region in Alaska. The gold in this case was an abundance of 'the silver of the sea', herring, which gave the town its second nickname: The Herring Town. Today Siglufjörður is a haven for hiking, sailing, fishing, skiing and other activities. You will also find a nice swimming pool there and a 9 hole golf course.

Golden Age of Herring

The golden age of herring lasted just over 100 years, from 1867 to 1968. Icelanders generally refer to this era as the 'herring fairy tale'. The country was still impoverished and essentially an undeveloped Danish colony at the time, but the resulting economic boom helped to turn Iceland into a developed country—that ultimately led to its independence.

Initially, the boom was mostly confined to several towns in the north of the country, but later it also moved to towns in the eastern fjords. At times, the export of herring accounted for up to half of the country's total export income.

Siglufjörður was at the forefront of this economic boom, and often the herring exports from this one town alone provided more than 20% of the country's total export income.

As one would expect, given any kind of gold rush, the town blossomed and grew rapidly, fostering a colourful culture that is still remembered and honoured today.

The Herring Era Museum

Siglufjörður's ambitious Herring Era Museum is the largest industrial and marine museum in Iceland. It has five exhibition buildings, totalling 2,500 square metres, and it is most likely the only one of its kind in the world.

The town itself is a piece of history and the museum has essentially endeavoured to rebuild a part of the old town as it was during its heyday, complete with herring boats, a herring port, boatyard, and a herring factory. In addition, it puts on live re-enactments. It

won Iceland's Museum Award in 2000, and the Micheletti Award in 2004 as the best new industrial museum in Europe.

The museum is open daily from June to September. Last summer the museum broke its attendance record in June, with 4,000 visitors—thanks, in part, to big cruise ships that visited the fjord.

Saturday admissions in July include a 'Salting Show' at 3pm, where 'Herring girls' re-enact the gutting and packing of herring into barrels, in the way it was done in the old days. Traditional songs and dances are also performed and guests are invited to join in.



Síldarminjasafn Íslands
 Snorrageata 10 • 580 Siglufjörður
 +354 467 1604
 safn@sild.is
 www.sild.is

SKAGASTRÖND

WHERE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE MEET

One might think that life in a small remote fishing town would result in a reserved population wary of outsider influence. This is not the case in the town of Skagaströnd in the north-west of Iceland, where international artists mingle freely with local fishermen, creating a unique atmosphere where the past meets the present without judgment.



Fish Is Life

Like many Icelandic towns, Skagaströnd's history is centered around fishing, which is very much a part of Skagaströnd's identity today. The harbour is usually bustling with life, with boats coming and going, people and forklifts moving about trying to get the fish from the boats and to the stores as quickly and securely as possible. Just watching the harbour life is an activity in itself, enjoyed by locals and visitors alike—just be careful not to get in the way. There is also a pleasant coffee shop, Kaffi Bjarmanes, in a renovated old house right by the seaside just across from the harbour, giving an excellent view of the harbour life, the ocean and the ever-watchful seabirds around.

What Does the Future Bring?

The first documented settler in Skagaströnd was a woman named Þórdís who resided there in the late 10th century with substantial influence in her community. She was known to be a spirited and fierce woman, with the gift of prophecy, who made no compromises when it came to dealing with powerful men at the time and is noted as such in several of the old Icelandic Sagas. Although the people of her time might have been glad to be rid of her, present day inhabitants of Skagaströnd celebrate her legacy

and have opened a museum in her honour. Visitors are taken through her fascinating life with various exhibitions and artifacts—as well as given the chance to have a prophecy given about them.

Another museum can be found in a charming tiny old house, named Árnes, which gives an impression of daily life in the early 20th century.

Art and Fish

You might not think that modern day artists and small town fishermen would have much in common, but as it turns out, they have co-existed in Skagaströnd with great success for several years now. The Nes Artist Residency was opened in 2008 and has resulted in a colourful atmosphere where past and present traditions find common ground. The mayor of Skagaströnd, Magnús B. Jónsson, says the success of the artist residency is a testament to the positivity and open-mindedness of the people of Skagaströnd. "We have all types of people coming here from all over the world and staying with us for extended periods of time working on their craft and the fact that it has gone seamlessly really says something about our community." Magnús says

that the advent of the Nes Artist Residency has livened up the town and the creative atmosphere has proven to be quite contagious. "Now it is not at all uncommon to have all sorts of happenings and events that would have seemed strange before, but today are considered part of everyday life here in Skagaströnd." The town itself is also decorated with creative art. You'll find a very striking exhibition centered on the old Nordic gods made from scrap metal, carefully selected to represent each one. Loki, the god of mischief and deception, is for example made from an old manure spreader and Odinn, the highest god of all, is made from scraps from a power station. The Sunwatch is also a quite striking piece, made from four basalt columns that guide sunrays according to an old Icelandic time-telling tradition.

Plenty to Do

A popular activity is hiking to the top of the Spákonufell mountain or along the sea cliffs at Spákonufellshöfði, which is where Þórdís lived. Some even claim that her face can be seen, petrified in the mountain.

Detailed trail descriptions and maps are available in town. You'll find a traditional Icelandic swimming pool, with the obligatory relaxing hot pot, a nine-hole golf course and Borgin, a restaurant in a unique log house with a maritime theme.

- DT/ASF

Skagaströnd Municipality
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Eyjafjarðará river, with a magnificent view of the mountains and Eyjafjörður fjord. -ASF

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THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

Iceland on Horseback with Pólar Hestar of North Iceland

One of Iceland's most iconic symbols can be found in its own special breed of horse, known for its friendly nature and its two extra gaits. The hardy and sure-footed Icelandic horse is an excellent introduction to the world of riding, and what better way to experience Iceland than from the back of one of these magnificent creatures that have been part of the Icelandic landscape for over a thousand years.

Now you can get a feel for the real Iceland with Pólar Hestar Tours of North Iceland who offer a range of riding tours that appeal to all levels of ability, from the absolute beginner all the way to the most seasoned rider. The tours can be arranged for from 1 to 4 hour periods.

Short Duration Tours are perfect for beginners or those with a little riding experience. These reasonably priced tours run from just one hour to two hours up to half-day tours of 4 hours and are also available in winter, weather permitting. This is a wonderful introduction to the Icelandic horse and great fun for both adults and children.



For intermediate riders there are many options to choose from, including the popular 'Between the Fjord and the Valley of the Elves Tour'. This 6-day, 5-night tour takes you through lovely landscapes, with breathtaking views, delightful deep green valleys with rushing brooks and along a fascinating scenic coastline.

Ring Around the Midnight Sun

The fragrance of early spring, bright nights and the awakening nature are characteristics of this tour, which consists of several rides and sightseeing by bus. You will experience the days around the midnight sun visiting the famous turf

houses of Laufás, the whales in Eyjafjörður fjord and the amazing area around the breathtaking Lake Mývatn. A Midnight Ride, as a highlight of the week at this special time of year, when the sun hardly sets, is included.

Fascinating North Iceland Tour

Take part in this exhilarating 8-day, 7-night tour—a wonderful opportunity to experience the diversity of Iceland's mesmerising nature.

The tour's itinerary includes some of North Iceland's well known waterfalls as well as Europe's most active volcanic area. You can witness the breathtaking Highlands, once the domain of outlaws, elves and trolls, and journey over ancient lava fields in this unforgettable tour that is suitable for more experienced riders.

-ASF/EMV

Pólar Hestar Tours is run by the husband and wife team of Stefán and Juliane and has been a firm favourite with horse lovers from around the world for over 30 years.

Pólar Hestar
 Gryttubakki II - 601 Akureyri
 +354 463 3179
 polarhestar@polarhestar.is
 www.polarhestar.is

RESEARCHING ICELAND'S PUFFINS

Náttúrustofa Suðurlands studies Iceland's puffin population, and reports dire findings

Birdwatchers are delighted when they visit Iceland, as there are more than 300 species of birds that can be seen around the island. Iceland serves as a stopover for birds migrating between North America and Europe. Popular bird species are Gyrfalcons, Great Northern Divers, Harlequins, and Barrows Goldeneyes.

However, the birds that have become synonymous with Iceland are the adorable puffins, with their black and white bodies, bright orange feet and colourful red, blue and orange beaks. Puffins are remarkable swimmers and divers, able to stay underwater for over 2 minutes and surface with many small fish in their beaks. While exceptional in water, puffins are known for their uneven landings on land, which is part of their charm. It's possible to see puffins during the summer in many areas including the Westman Islands, Grimsey, the Látrabjarg cliffs in the Westfjords, Hafnarhólmi in Borgarfjörður Eystri, and Papey.

About 7.7 million puffins called Iceland home during the summer months in 2002, but their numbers have dwindled over the last 13 years at an alarming rate. Now only 3.2 million are estimated to remain, according to Erpur Snær Hansen, the Director of Ecological Research at Náttúrustofa Suðurlands (South Iceland Nature Research Centre).

Náttúrustofa Suðurlands was founded in 1996 and has a team of scientists



conducting research on environmental and wildlife issues. Erpur has been investigating the puffin population of the Westman Islands since 2007 and has some startling data regarding Iceland's puffins.

If winter surface sea temperatures remain at current levels or higher, Erpur says, then much of the puffin population of south and west Iceland will disappear in the next 10 to 20 years. "We go around Iceland twice a summer to measure chick production," says Erpur. "We also study their diet and environment."

Iceland's puffin population has been struggling largely due to lack of food.

"They predominantly eat two species of fish around Iceland—capelin and sand eel," says

Erpur. "The sand eel population collapsed in 2003-2005 and has not recovered yet, and we believe that is a real problem." The main hypothesis the agency is working on is that warmer winter ocean temperatures are lowering young sand eels' survival as they exhaust their wintering energy reserves prior to the spring food appearance. The spring bloom has also been greatly delayed over the same time period. Lack of fat fish has caused famine for some colonies of Iceland's puffins.

The impact is clear. Adult puffins must forage farther and come back with fewer fish for their young. Researchers are seeing puffin chicks starve, nests are abandoned, and fewer adult birds are breeding.



About 7.7 million puffins called Iceland home during the summer months in 2002, but their numbers have dwindled over the last 13 years, at an alarming rate. Now only 3.2 million are estimated to remain. Suðurlands (South Iceland Nature Research Centre).



"This has occurred before," says Erpur, explaining that the population dynamics are linked to a periodic warming cycle called the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation (AMO). Indeed, waters surrounding Iceland warmed for about 35 years, and then cooled off for another 35 years, and puffin populations have correspondingly dropped, then recovered. However, it appears to be different now.

Ocean temperatures have now climbed as much as two degrees since the last cold period, but similar to the last warm period (1920-1964). Now the spring bloom is very late but it's timing in the last warm period is unknown.

The puffin chicks

are feeling the impact. Even when the current warming cycle ends, around 2030, it won't perhaps be cool enough, depending on the effects of global warming. "The warming is definitely felt in Iceland," he says. "It makes things happen fast, and the birds are suffering."

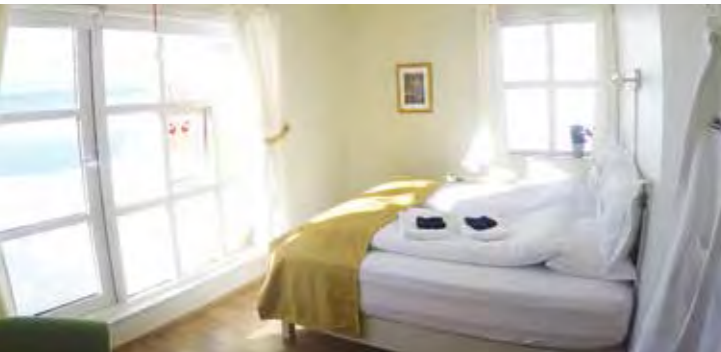
Because of the declining puffin population, the government should consider some changes, says Erpur. "The hunting is unsustainable," he says. "We need to rethink our management system and base it on scientific measurements and on being sustainable, similar to the fishing industry here. Something needs to be done."

Puffins impact tourism as well, and that's something the government need to consider, says Erpur. "Many people come from all over the world to see Iceland's puffins during the summer months," he says. "It's a big part of business when you think of whale and puffin tours. Puffins are worth more money to the tourist industry alive rather than dead." And that goes for restaurants in Iceland. "Seeing puffin on the menu at some restaurants is both embarrassing and sad," he says. "These birds are important and we're losing them. There needs to be a shift in thinking to help preserve puffins." An easy and responsible solution for the government would be to ban the trade of game.



NORTH AURORA EXCLUSIVE BATHS

Focusing on Health and Wellness Travel in Reykjadalur, North Iceland



Health and wellness tourism is gaining traction the world over and Iceland is no exception. Iceland is well known for its abundant geothermal energy that is used in a variety of ways as is evidenced by the plethora of geothermal swimming pool complexes found in every little town and village right around the country.

North Aurora Exclusive Baths

The owner of North Aurora Guesthouse, Bryndís Pétursdóttir, has made full use of the happy coincidence that her guesthouse is located 500m from one such swimming pool in North Iceland's beautiful Reykjadalur valley.

Bryndís has obtained exclusive rights to the use of the facilities and absolutely

every evening from 10pm to 1am, North Aurora Exclusive Baths is open to the public.

Here you can luxuriate in the healing waters of the spacious hot tubs and the heated swimming pool, or treat yourself to the soothing effects of water therapy with the Icelandic designed 'Flothetta' floating device.



Top off the evening with a rejuvenating massage or facial for the complete North Aurora Exclusive Baths spa experience. It's the ultimate way to end your day, soaking your cares away while the stars, the moon, or maybe even the magnificent Northern Lights dance overhead.

A guesthouse that stands out from the rest

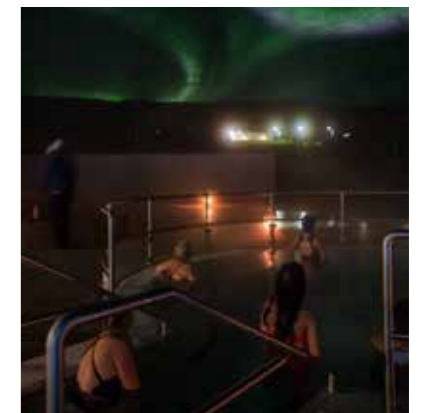
With an eye for detail and an emphasis on health and wellbeing, Bryndís opened the North Aurora Guesthouse in 2014 and provides her guests with many luxurious touches found only in more exclusive hotels; hand soaps from Sóley Organics and fluffy organic cotton bathrobes for each guest are but a few examples.

When it comes to breakfast, healthy food

choices are the order of the day; freshly made waffles, homemade organic breads and jams, organic fruits and vegetables and even local free-range eggs are all standard breakfast options. These are just some of the special touches that make North Aurora Guesthouse stand out from the rest.

Connect to Nature in Reykjadalur

Consider a guided nature walk to the nearby elf stone with Bryndís, who is very knowledgeable about elven healing energies. Visitors can also take part in a therapeutic porcelain workshop on Wednesdays from 5pm to 8pm giving participants an opportunity to create a small porcelain object that will serve as a wonderful memento of their stay in North Iceland's Reykjadalur valley.



North Aurora Guesthouse
Lautavegur 8 · 650 Laugar
+354 860 2206
north@auroraguesthouse.is
www.northaurorabaths.com
www.auroraguesthouse.is



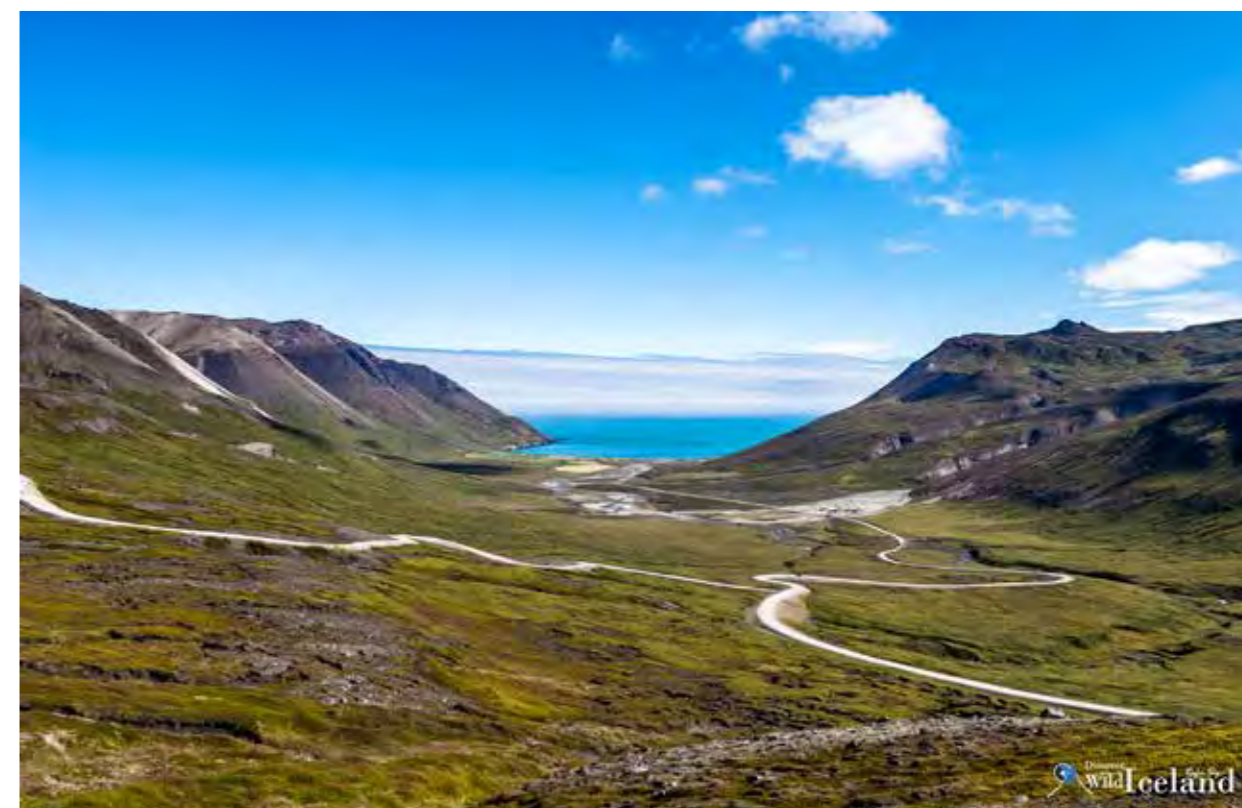
EAST *Iceland*

Tiny, tight-knit communities extend a warm welcome here. A well-developed infrastructure, with regular flights from Reykjavik to Egilsstaðir, the main hub of the area, enables visitors to enjoy the beauty of the region. The ferry from Europe docks at the 19th century town of Seyðisfjörður, making the East a good starting point for a holiday. Tours of all types take visitors to Europe's largest glacier, stark highland mountains and sweet-smelling heathlands and, for fishing and kayaking, to mirror-smooth fjords. The hiking nature-lover can discover countless spectacular routes, with frequent waterfalls and reindeer

sightings. The beauty of this area has drawn artists and designers to the little towns, which have developed their own cultural flavour, many with a strong European—and especially, French or Norwegian—influence. There is a long history of folklore here. Borgarfjörður eystri is known as the capital of the elves. It's also an area of hiking trails and birdwatching, with puffins being especially plentiful. Brilliantly coloured semi-precious stones are found in the mountains and Petra's Stone Museum in Stöðvarfjörður holds probably the world's largest private collection. The numerous hotels, guesthouses and camping areas attest to the rising popularity of the area.



#EASTICELAND





THE EAST ICELAND HERITAGE MUSEUM

Appreciating the life and times of a bygone era in East Iceland

The East Iceland Heritage Museum in Egilsstaðir showcases life as it was in the bygone era of Iceland's rural society where self-sufficiency was essential to survival.

On display is a traditional 'baðstofa' or communal living/sleeping room, taken from an authentic Icelandic turf house that was inhabited until as late as 1964. Visitors are encouraged to step into the 'baðstofa' and experience the nostalgia of life as it was in days gone by.

The museum prides itself, however, on its permanent reindeer exhibition.

Found only in East Iceland, the rather shy and sometimes elusive wild reindeer have a mystical air about them and contribute to the area's sense of identity. With their numbers on the increase, it is possible to see them as they descend from their feeding grounds at higher elevations

in summer, to lower elevation grasslands nearer the coast in winter.

The Heritage Museum guides visitors through the history of the reindeer settlement in Iceland, their behaviour, characteristics and habits, a look at hunting regulations and, in short, everything you need to know about reindeer in Iceland. This is a unique opportunity to learn about these fascinating creatures, via a variety of displays and multi-media presentations that bring the exhibit to life.

The exhibition commemorates two the reindeer enthusiasts, Helgi Valtýsson, writer, and

Eðvarður Sigurgeirsson, photographer and filmmaker. In an effort to shed light on the plight of the Icelandic reindeer, the pair tracked the movements of various herds from 1939 to 1944.

Eðvarður's film, "In Reindeer Territory", is available for viewing at the exhibition.

Visitors are also invited to watch a new documentary about Icelandic reindeer and a short animated film based on a section of the book, Independent People by Halldór Laxness, a twentieth-century Icelandic writer and Nobel Prize winner. -SP

Admission: Adults (18+) 1,000 ISK
Opening hours: 1 June to 31 August
Mon-Fri: 11:30-19:00.
Sat-Sun: 10:30-18:00.
Winter: Thur-Fri: 11:00-16:00

East Iceland Heritage Museum
 Laufskógum 1 • 700 Egilsstaðir
 +354 471 1412
 minjasafn@minjasafn.is
 www.minjasafn.is




GUARDED BY A FIREY DRAGON

The Otherworldly Landscape of Vopnafjörður

Imagine discovering a new land in the North in medieval days, only to be met by its protector—a mighty flying dragon. This was what greeted a Nordic seafarer according to the Old Norse saga of the kings, Heimskringla.

Today, Vopnafjörður stands as a spectacular example of the grand, harsh, but beautiful Icelandic landscape. First settled by Viking seafarers 1,100 years ago, its name means 'Weapon Fjord', coming from a settler called Eyvindur vopni. It also boasts its own saga, Vopnafirðinga saga, describing a dispute between rival local chieftains.

The dragon is Vopnafjörður's symbol and one of the four 'landvættir'—guardians of Iceland, pictured on Iceland's coat of arms.

The wide sandy coastline hosts a myriad of marine life forms and the magnificent cliffs and rocky islets are superb. They culminate

in natural wonders such as Skjölfjörur, accessed by driving the old highway east of the village, before it becomes the high pass of Hellisheiði between Fljótsdalshérað and Vopnafjörður, providing a spectacular view.

Vopnafjörður village, picturesque with its colourful old wooden houses, surrounded by rocky cliffs and islets, lies on the small Kolbeinstangi peninsula. It was one of Iceland's major commercial harbours in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the last half century, the fishing industry grew considerably and is the largest business sector in the area today.

Remembering the past

The Kaupvangur museum is located in a large old wooden house down by the harbour. It remembers the thousands of emigrants who fled the region to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

following the devastating Askja volcanic eruption of 1875. It also commemorates brothers Jón Múli Árnason and Jónas Árnason, who wrote several jazzy musicals in the fifties and sixties, which have become classics of Icelandic popular culture. The historical Bustarfell farm is a regional museum where history comes alive through storytelling and workshops each summer. The same family lived here in a large turf farmhouse from 1532 until 1966. Only a few such farmhouses are preserved today. A Literary inspiration One of Iceland's most renowned novels, 'Independent People', by the Nobel Laureate Halldór Laxness, was greatly influenced by the struggle of poor farmers in the countryside surrounding Vopnafjörður. The area is the childhood home of another great figure of 20th century Icelandic literature, Gunnar Gunnarsson, who grew up on Ljósstaðir. This famous writer wrote about the country life of Iceland, influenced by the people, nature and culture of Vopnafjörður. Two great salmon rivers flow through the untouched landscape surrounding Vopnafjörður Bay. A cosy geothermal swimming pool with a nice view over the river sits on the banks the Selá. -NNH/ASF



Vopnafjarðarhreppur
 Hamrahlið 15 • 690 Vopnafjörður
 +354 473 1300
 skrifstofa@vopnafjarðarhreppur.is
 www.vopnafjarðarhreppur.is





SOUTH *Iceland*



#SOUTHICELAND

The wealth of South Iceland lies in the variety of geological, historical and nature sites along with the long list of activities that can be experienced in the region. This region has geological wonders such as Geysir; the waterfalls of Gullfoss, Háifoss, Skógafoss, Systra and Seljalandsfoss; Þingvellir, where the tectonic plates crack the Earth; Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull; the Kerið caldera; world-famous volcanos like Hekla—the Gateway to Hell', Lakagígar, Laki, the notorious Eyjafjallajökull and the Katla Geopark; fantasy sites like Þórsmörk and Jökulsárlón. Here are historical sites like the world's longest-running

parliament at Þingvellir; museums, churches, the Stöng settlement, the Saga centre and villages like Eyrarbakki. Activities abound. Tours take you to all the sites, including the glaciers. Horse riding tours are popular. Try the riverjet, boat trips or kayaking; scuba diving in clear waters, fishing or caving. Independent travellers can try hiking and cycling, camping or caravanning. Winter activities are just as thrilling. Fortunately, there is plenty of accommodation available throughout the region from camping to high-class hotels and restaurants to suit every taste. A developed infrastructure helps you get the most from your trips.

THE ENCHANTED ISLAND

Hotel Borealis, a Countryside Hotel with Style and Soul



While travelling in Iceland during autumn, the weather and the sun's changing light create a unique atmosphere in the countryside. Famous poet Rilke found appropriate words for this time of contemplation and retreat: "Lay your shadows upon the sundials, and o'er the isles allow your winds to vent".

Enjoying Northern Lights

As darkness returns in autumn, the Northern Lights start illuminating the night skies, and as Hotel Borealis is situated far away from light pollution, the darkness makes them shine even brighter. And there is nothing like soaking in the hotel's hot tub after an exciting day as the Northern Lights dance above you!

In Nature's Heart

Hotel Borealis, just a few kilometres from the charming town of Selfoss, offers the serene silence of an elegant countryside retreat while activities and bustling life are on hand a short distance away. The welcomingly neat white houses have been tastefully furnished by blending last century's Icelandic antiques with modern style and prove to be so cosy you might never want to leave!



Offering 20 comfortable rooms with bathrooms, cosy bungalows for families and a small villa, Hotel Borealis is able to meet the needs of individuals and groups.

The hotel has a special room for conferences and events and 'Hlaðan', a renovated barn that is a perfect location for a

romantic Icelandic country wedding. Hotel Borealis also serves well as a calm retreat for writing a book or contemplating the magic of the Icelandic changing light. When the autumn sun pours out her golden beams on the heather and red leaves, nearby Þingvellir National Park turns into an enchanted island. Cuddle up in a traditional wool sweater and take a stroll through the famous former site of Iceland's parliament, discover Gullfoss waterfall and Geysir on a day trip, try golfing on the nearby course or fishing in Lake Úlfjótuvatn. Then, with daylight slowly fading, return to Hotel Borealis for a marvellous dinner, served on antique tables in the spirit of good, old Icelandic hospitality. The chef prides himself on only using local products such as highland lamb, arctic char from Lake Þingvallavatn and vegetables grown in the area's greenhouses for his delicious meals. -DT



Hotel Borealis
Brúarholt II Grímsnes • 801 Selfoss
+354 561 3661
booking@hotelborealis.is
www.hotelborealis.is



Experience Iceland's Magical Northern Lights

REYKJAVIK EXCURSIONS LEADS THE WAY

You've finally made the decision that this is the year you are going to see Iceland! You've booked your tickets and now the excitement of planning your visit begins. While there is a dizzying array of sights to see and experiences to be had in Iceland, seeing the Northern Lights rates high on many visitors 'must see' list. Reykjavik Excursions, one of Iceland's leading tour companies, understands your passion for travel and excitement. The company offers a whole spectrum of guided tours from Reykjavik with a variety of Northern Lights tour options for you to choose from, and at a variety of price points to match your budget.

It's a deal!

The very affordable Northern Lights tour takes you deep into the beautiful Icelandic countryside, where, weather conditions permitting, you will have a wonderful opportunity to see this spectacular display of cool coloured lights dance across the night sky. For your convenience, several departure times are available over the course of the Northern Lights season that runs from late August to April. If weather conditions are not in your favour and you miss them, you are welcome to take the tour again free of charge. Sweet!

Pamper yourself at Laugarvatn Fontana Spa

For Northern Lights hunting with a health and wellness twist, Reykjavik Excursions offers guided tours to the open-air geothermal pools at Laugarvatn Fontana Spa which lies on the famous Golden Circle route. Here you can luxuriate in the soothing warm waters of the spa's open air hot tubs and pools, enjoy a smorgasbord of locally prepared foods and relax with a spa-side drink while waiting for the Northern

Lights to appear. Iceland is well known for its geothermal pools and Laugarvatn is one of the oldest and most renowned geothermal areas in the country. Afterwards, you will be off again in the coach, chasing down the Northern Lights on the return trip to Reykjavik. To your health!

A 14 hour epic journey on Iceland's south coast

Now it's possible to visit the magnificent glacial lagoon on Iceland's south coast in winter and get a chance to hunt for the elusive Northern Lights at the same time. The lagoon, with its mesmerizing glittering icebergs from the glacier floating in the waters that lead to the sea will surely be one of the highpoints of your Iceland tour, made even more magical in winter. On the return leg of the journey, you will stop at many iconic spots such as Vik, Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss waterfalls.

Convenient and cost effective Flybus South

Last but not least, from October 16th 2016, Reykjavik Excursions will be offering a new airport shuttle service, Flybus South (via BSÍ bus terminal), departing twice daily from Keflavik International Airport to the South Coast with stops in the villages of Hveragerði, Selfoss, Hella and Hvolsvöllur. Direct returns to the airport (bypassing BSÍ bus terminal) are also operated twice daily.

Reykjavik Excursions offers 24/7 customer phone support and will be happy to answer your questions. Enjoy your stay in Iceland this year! *-EMV*



Reykjavik Excursions
 BSÍ Bus Terminal • 101 Reykjavik
 +354 580 5400
 main@re.is
 www.re.is





THE HIDDEN PEARL OF ICELAND

Dine on Rare Arctic Char at Icelandair Hotel Klaustur



Awaiting your arrival in the beautiful and peaceful village of Kirkjubæjarklaustur, sits 'The Hidden Pearl of Iceland' as many guests have affectionately renamed the place.

Whether you are driving, hiking, or travelling in a large group through the South of Iceland, an authentic Icelandic gourmet dining experience can be yours to enjoy at Icelandair Hotel Klaustur.

This modern hotel is nestled between two majestic glaciers and near several renowned natural wonders of Iceland, such as: Jokulsarlon, Skaftafell, Lakagigar, and Landmannalaugar. The reason why guests call Icelandair Hotel Klaustur 'The hidden pearl' is because of its in-house restaurant which serves succulent gourmet dishes made with top quality Icelandic ingredients, including the rare fresh water fish, Arctic char.

Rare Arctic Char is the main ingredient in Icelandair Hotel Klaustur's own fish soup and many other popular gourmet dishes.

Arctic char is a cold-water fish which is closely related to both the salmon and the lake trout. It is one of the rarest fish species in the world and can only be found in deep, cold, glacial lakes. In Kirkjubæjarklaustur, the Arctic Char is farmed in a free flowing stream that comes from pure oxygen-enriched glacial spring water which filtered through layers of natural lava rock originating from the Vatnajokull Glacier.

The char is fed high quality capelin fish meal enriched with soy protein, Omega 3 fatty acids and mineral supplements. At Icelandair Hotel Klaustur, it is prepared fresh daily by a knowledgeable chef as the primary ingredient in both main courses and starters.

Fire and Ice

The restaurant also has a really nice balcony that offers a spectacular view of Vatnajokull Glacier. Often guests find themselves in complete tranquillity out on the veranda as they take in this view while snuggled in comfortable lounge chairs, enjoying the warm summers or mild winters.

Desserts are also a speciality, and the combination of Iceland's two contrasting elements of fire and ice is portrayed in perfect harmony by joining hot rhubarb soup with cold vanilla ice-cream, served with fresh mountain berries. This combination creates a wonderful balance of sweet and sour flavours with hot and cold temperatures and is a

perfect way to indulge the senses.

The restaurant can seat up to 150 guests at a time and opening hours are:

Lunch; 12:00 till 16:00

Dinner; 19:00 - 21:30 (1.June -15.September),

18:30-21:00 (16.September - 31. May).

Leisure activities in the area include, but are not limited to: a nearby swimming pool, a golf course, hiking, glacier tours and sightseeing.

Furthermore, Icelandair Hotel Klaustur offers guests a choice between 57 comfortable modern rooms and is perfect for singles, couples or large groups.

For more information about Klaustur Char feel free to visit the official website. www.klausturbleikja.is/ - ÓB



Icelandair Hotel Klaustur
 Klausturvegur 6 • 880 Kirkjubæjarklaustur
 +354 487 4900
 klausur@icehotels.is
 www.icehotels.is

HOTEL SELFOSS

A Spacious, Modern Hotel on Iceland's South Coast



Big hotels are not exactly a dime a dozen in Iceland and certainly a rarity outside Reykjavík. So it was a pleasant surprise to spend time in one of South Iceland's oldest and largest hotels on the banks of the beautiful Ölfusá River. The drive south-east over the Hellisheiði heath from Reykjavík brings you straight to the town of Selfoss, and it is here, just over the bridge, that you will find the genteel and firmly established Hotel Selfoss.

The times, they are a'changin

Originally built in 1986 and with a fraction of the rooms that it boasts today, the hotel continues to steadily upgrade in order to meet the needs of the recent wave of travellers who have been flooding into the country in the last few years. Little by little, new additions and refurbishments have been undertaken and in the spring of 2016, a whole new top floor with twenty-eight stylish rooms was completed. With a grand total of 139 rooms spanning 4 floors, Hotel Selfoss is easily the largest hotel in south Iceland. Standard features in every room include: en-suite bath, satellite tv, wi-fi, coffee and tea making facilities, minibar, hairdryer and mini-safe. The 28 brand new and elegant 4th floor rooms, with exceptional views over the river or town, come with additional features such as king sized beds, mini fridges, and of course, top-notch, en-suite bathrooms.



The friendly folks at Riverside Restaurant

Dinner at Hotel Selfoss' Riverside Restaurant is always a pleasure; white linen tablecloths lend a graceful note to the dining experience and the views over the river and beyond are nothing short of superb, no matter the season. The menu offers an array of well-chosen Icelandic specialties—creamy bisque de langoustine, goose carpaccio, a very tasty and tender rack of lamb—among other tempting choices. The restaurant uses, as you can imagine, top



quality, locally sourced ingredients as much as possible and everything is overseen by a friendly and professional wait staff who know their stuff!

Hotel Selfoss' best kept secret

After a thrilling, yet exhausting day exploring Iceland's natural wonders, don't forget to take some down time at the hotel's wonderfully relaxing Riverside Spa. Begin with a glass of wine from the in-spa bar, then move on to the saunas, the raindrop shower, the waterfall shower, the bucket shower or even the ice bath! End with a dip in the geothermal hot tub for the ultimate in the pampered life, Icelandic style.

Hotel Selfoss welcomes you!

-EMV

Hotel Selfoss
Eyravegur 2 • 800 Selfoss
+354 480 2500
info@hotelselfoss.is
www.hotelselfoss.is

WELCOME TO GEYSIR



THE GEYSIR CENTER IS DIRECTLY OPPOSITE OF THE GEOTHERMAL AREA OF THE GREAT GEYSIR AND STROKKUR



GEYSIR GLIMA BISTRO

COFFEE HOUSE WITH FRESHLY GROUND COFFEE

SWEET ICE CREAMS & CAKES

TRADITIONAL ICELANDIC MEAT SOUP

FISH SOUP & VEGETARIAN SOUP

LOCAL FOOD

MUSEUM OF HOT SPRINGS, VOLCANO AND ICELANDIC GLIMA



THE GEYSIR CENTER

HAUKADALUR

VAST VOLCANIC HOT SPOTS

Renowned volcanologist Haraldur Sigurðsson explains Iceland's complex volcanic systems.

Iceland's volcanoes are a growing source of tourism for the country, as travellers want the unique experience of scaling their summits or seeing them in action. When there is an eruption, local travel companies offer jeep, coach, helicopter, and plane tours to get the best views.

Most of Iceland's volcanoes are fissures, such as the 2014 Holuhraun eruption, where lava burst out of cracks in the earth's crust. Holuhraun produced fountains of lava shooting out of the earth, delighting photographers and keeping volcanologists busy to see if the nearby massive Bárðarbunga volcano would erupt. So far, it hasn't.

The three most active volcanoes on the island are Katla, Hekla, and Eyjafjallajökull, which erupted in 2010, bringing air travel to a halt, with a large ash cloud restricting

travel for days. Icelanders have learned to adapt to eruptions and most of them are situated away from populated areas. In the case of the 2014 Holuhraun eruption, the surrounding region near Vatnajökull was evacuated as locals, tourists and animals were moved from the area. The main threat was airborne toxins and those close to the region who were sensitive to them were advised to stay indoors and turn up their heating.

Ask the Expert

When looking at the science behind Iceland's many volcanoes, there is no better source than volcanologist Haraldur Sigurðsson, Director of the Volcano Museum, who has been researching the island's active and dormant volcanoes for more than 40 years.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Iceland's volcanoes is that Bárðarbunga is currently sitting on top of one of the earth's hot spots. "It's often said that Iceland is on the mid-Atlantic ridge, and that that's the main reason for volcanic activity, but that's actually a misconception," says Haraldur. "The much more important feature is the hot spot."

This hot spot began under Siberia approximately 250 million years ago, making it the oldest hot spot in the world. "The tectonic plates of the earth are floating on top of the earth's mantle, like a raft on water, but the hot spot is still in the same place," says Haraldur. "Now it is simmering below us. Once Siberia was over it, then Baffin Island, after that Greenland and now Iceland."

Scientists have identified some 40–50



Haraldur Sigurðsson

hotspots around the globe. Of these, Hawaii, Réunion Island, Yellowstone Park in the United States, Galápagos, and Iceland sit over those that are currently most active.

A hot spot is an area in the Earth's mantle where a column of hot magma rises up to melt through the crust, resulting in volcanic activity. The term 'hotspot' is also used when referring to the location on the Earth's surface where such volcanism has been taking place. In 1963, scientist J. Tuzo Wilson proposed the idea that volcanic chains such as the Hawaiian Islands result from the slow movement of a tectonic plate across a fixed hot spot deep beneath the surface of the planet.

Iceland's recent eruptions

The size and scale of Iceland's eruptions unsurprisingly vary. For instance, the largest eruption in Iceland's recent history was in 1783 when Lakagígar, a volcanic fissure in the south of Iceland, not far from the canyon of Eldgjá and the small village of Kirkjubæjarklaustur, erupted. The system erupted over an eight-month period between 1783 and 1784 from the Laki fissure and the adjoining Grímsvötn volcano, pouring out an estimated 14km³ of basalt lava and clouds of poisonous hydrofluoric acid and sulphur dioxide compounds that killed over 50% of the island's livestock, leading to a famine which then killed about 25% of Iceland's population.

The Laki eruption and its aftermath caused a drop in global temperatures, the sulphur dioxide causing crop failures in Europe and, possibly, droughts in Asia. The eruption has been estimated to have killed more than six million people globally, making it the deadliest eruption in history.

By contrast, the most recent eruption of Holuhraun in 2014-15 was small. The eruption began in three craters, compared to the 130 craters of Laki, with no explosive activity. Hardly any ash was emitted in the Holuhraun eruption, compared to the 0.9km³ ejecta volume of Laki and 0.1km³ ejecta volume of Eyjafjallajökull. While the highest lava fountains Holuhraun only reached approximately 100 metres, in Laki they were estimated to have reached a height of 1,400 metres.

Furthermore, in the first month of the Holuhraun eruption, the average daily SO₂ emission was 20,000 tons, or 600,000 tons in one month while, during the eight months of the Laki eruption, an estimated 120 million tons of SO₂ were emitted, or an average of 15 million tons per month.

Iceland's active volcanoes are each quite different, and are consistently monitored to give early warnings of eruptions and researched providing more insight into what triggers them and their aftermath.





ADVENTUROUS TOURS

Book one of Icelandic Mountain Guides' many action-packed tours.

Iceland is a volcanic island in flux with magma breaking through fissures and periodic eruptions that constantly redesign the rocky landscape, which makes it a hiker's paradise. Iceland offers rugged landscapes, towering mountains, vast glaciers and rolling lava fields. Icelandic Mountain Guides is a leading tour company that guides travelers from around the world.

Action-packed tours

Icelandic Mountain Guides, which has been in business for more than 20 years, offers hiking, ice climbing, mountain climbing, cross country skiing, glacier walking, horseback riding and Super Jeep tours throughout the year. Passionate and experienced guides revel in taking travelers on day tours, multi-day tours, and expeditions in Iceland, as well as guided tours to Greenland.



The company offers tours for all ages and levels of fitness.

Tours from Reykjavik

Icelandic Mountain Guides offers numerous tours departing from Reykjavik, making it convenient for travelers. One of the most popular tours is a glacier walk to the Sólheimajökull glacier tongue where



travelers will see ice sculptures, waterfalls and stunning scenery. The tours kicks off with a two-hour drive from Reykjavik, which takes you right under the famous Eyjafjallajökull



volcano that caused so much trouble with its eruption in the spring of 2010. Just east of the volcano lies Sólheimajökull, an outlet glacier from Mýrdalsjökull, Iceland's fourth-

largest glacier. There, the guides take you on a safe and easy glacier walk onto the ice field. As you explore ridges, and deep crevasses, you will learn more and more about these



disappearing giants. After an adventurous walk, on the way back to Reykjavik, there is a stop at the picturesque waterfalls, Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss.

Winter adventures

As the summer comes to an end, there is no need to fret because northern lights season is just around the corner! Icelandic Mountain Guides offers a number of tours that incorporate a northern lights hunt including trips to the Golden Circle, glacier walks, and Super Jeep tours. There's nothing quite like watching the majestic lights change colors, dance and flicker in the sky, beaming deep greens, whites and reds.

Years of experience

The company has more than two decades of experience creating exciting tours that accommodate and adapt to different needs, preferences, and languages. Whether you are a solo traveler, a family, or are coming to Iceland in a large group, Icelandic Mountain Guides has you covered. The company operates from their company headquarters in Reykjavik year-round, and from their base camp located in the beautiful Skaftafell National Park situated in the Southeastern part of the country at the foot of the Vatnajökull Glacier, from May to September. - JG

Icelandic Mountain Guides
 Stórhöfði 33 • 110 Reykjavík
 +354 587 9999
 info@mountainguides.is
 www.mountainguides.is

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GIANTESS



South East Iceland's Vatnajökull Region

The Vatnajökull region is a narrow stretch of land that lies just below Vatnajökull Glacier, spanning from Lómagnúpur in the west, to Hvalnes on its eastern border. From the highest peaks of Hvannadalshnúkur, down to the expansive glacial outwash plains that characterize the area, the region embraces over 200km of Iceland's main ring road.

Presiding serenely over the area, Vatnajökull Glacier rises to just over 2,000 metres and conceals a number of very active volcanoes under her massive ice cap. Formed as a result of the relentless grinding and crushing of everything in its path, many scenic wonders can be found at the very edges of the glacier. Glistening glacial lagoons, thundering rivers and waterfalls as well as numerous ice caves are just some of the natural gems that can be found within the borders of the region.

Iconic glacial lagoons

The popular Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon has certainly been a popular destination in recent years, and now its sister, Fjallsárlón,

is set to join in the limelight. The beautiful lagoon, which lies hidden just 10km west of Jökulsárlón, now hosts a team of well-seasoned locals offering zodiac boat rides on its pristine waters.

Into an ice-blue world

Should you have your heart set on visiting an ice cave, look no further. These crystal-ice-blue caves are only open from November to March for obvious reasons and several local companies run by experienced teams of caving experts offer tours into this ever-changing world of subglacial speleology.

Kayaking for everyone

It's so relaxing taking a kayak out on the peaceful waters of Heinaberg Lagoon in the heart of the Vatnajökull region. This is a wonderful opportunity for everyone from complete beginners to seasoned kayakers to experience the beauty of this very special corner of Iceland.



Of course, there are just oodles of other activities as well—take a snowmobile, jeep or hiking tour on the glacier, observe puffins at Ingólfshöfði, or get a bird's eye view over the glacier on a sightseeing flight, and don't forget the not-to-be-missed annual fireworks extravaganza at Jökulsárlón in late August.

For more in-depth information about the Vatnajökull region, check out their website listed below. -EMV

The Vatnajökull Region

Litlubrú 2 · 780 Hornafirði
+354 470 8080
info@visitvatnajokull.is
www.visitvatnajokull.is



DINE IN THE LANGOUSTINE CAPITAL

Humarhöfnin satisfies the hunger for whole langoustine in Höfn

Iceland is known for some of the finest fresh fish in the world and a large share of the country's catch is landed at Höfn í Hornafirði, on the south-east coast. Höfn (which sounds like 'Hup' to our ears and means harbour) is also known as the langoustine capital of Iceland, where several thousand visitors gather in the town for the annual Humarhátíð (Langoustine) Festival, to be held in June.

You would expect the langoustine capital of Iceland to have a fine-dining restaurant that can do justice to the lovely little crustacean. The Humarhöfnin sea-food restaurant, which has been a big success since it was opened over 7 years ago by Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, her brother Ari Þorsteinsson and their spouses, has definitely earned that accolade.

A menu to entice any connoisseur

A favourite with tourists from the Mediterranean countries, Humarhöfnin was the first restaurant in Iceland to serve whole langoustine, though it has now become



popular in the town. The concept is still new in Iceland, so each diner who orders langoustine receives illustrated instructions on the finer points of using the langoustine cracker and fork that come with the dish.

The menu was created and developed by the French chef Jacques DuPont and his many dishes such as the beautifully presented 'Mix of Whole Langoustine and Tails' and the famous 'Black Magic Sauce' have been very successful. Paired with one of Humarhöfnin's specially selected wines, you are in line for an



absolute feast. Also on the menu, the arctic char is a delight. The crème brûlée, made from local eggs and imported Madagascar vanilla will have you swooning and you might want or need to order a double portion.

The casual, bright and lively décor fits Humarhöfnin's harbour location and the friendly wait staff will be happy to point out the very boat that brought in the day's catch, moored at the docks just a short distance away. The building itself was originally the town co-op before it was totally renovated and transformed into this beautiful restaurant. There is an exhibit on the 2nd floor which portrays the history of the house.

If you are a langoustine aficionado, you can fly, drive or take a bus to Höfn where you will find your seafood haven awaiting you. -EMV

Humarhöfnin

Hafnarbraut 4 · 780 Höfn
+354 478 1200
info@humarhofnin.is
www.humarhofnin.is



GLACIER JOURNEY TOURS

In the Realm of Vatnajökull Glacier

There are few experiences on earth that compare to the heady rush one feels while standing atop the largest glacier in Europe. Until recently, your chances to scale the heights of Vatnajökull Glacier have been limited, as very few tour companies have the skills, the manpower or the equipment necessary to pull off such an adventure. Glacier Journey Tours, however, is one such company. Long time residents of the area, Laufey and her husband Guðlaugur started the company in 2006 and know the area better than most. The company offers a variety of exciting tours on and around the massive glacier which dwarfs the more famous Eyjafjallajökull Glacier several times over.

Ready, set, snowmobile!

Explore the summit of Vatnajökull Glacier with Glacier Journey's guided snowmobile tours that begin at Guesthouse Skálafell in summer, and at the fabulous Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon



in winter. For those with no snowmobile experience, your guides will be happy to give you a mini-lesson to show you the ropes. You'll be flying over the glacier on your snowmobile like a pro in no time.

For those who prefer something a little tamer

Sit back, relax and watch the world go by, (or in this case, the glacier) from the comfort of a 'super jeep' - a specially modified 4x4 that is needed to navigate Iceland's rugged terrain. Led by Glacier Journey's professional driver/guides, the tour will take you 1400m above sea level where, on a clear day, you can literally see forever...or so it seems.

Braving the depths of an icy-blue cave

Vatnajökull's ephemeral ice caves are probably one of the most astoundingly beautiful phenomena in Iceland. Tours run from November through March, as summers in south Iceland are too warm to support the caves year round and care must be taken even in winter. Glacier Journey's highly trained professional guides are therefore a must and will be with you all the way in this unique environment that few have had the opportunity to see for themselves. -EMV

Glacier Journey Tours
 Víkurbraut 4 • 780 Höfn
 +354 478 1517/
 +354 867 0493
 info@glacierjourney.is
 www.glacierjourney.is

EXPERIENCE THE SOUTH

Hótel Hvolsvöllur is a gem among some of the best natural sights in the South

South Iceland attracts the most tourists of any of the regions, but it still feels untouched and exotic in many places. Glaciers, mountains, and several active volcanoes, like Katla and Hekla, beckon tourists to visit. A wide and diverse region, the South is home to well-known sites like Geysir, Gullfoss, Seljavallalaug, and Skógarfoss and lesser-known gems like the Laugarvegur hiking trail, an area with colourful mountains, waterfalls, and lava-shaped landscapes. Hótel Hvolsvöllur is perfectly situated as a base for exploring the beautiful south. The hotel itself is cosy, with friendly staff members, top-notch service, and a cool, nature-centred décor.

Cosy accommodation

The hotel offers 64 rooms of all sizes in a beautiful environment. There are 25 triple rooms, 31 doubles and 8 single rooms. Hótel Hvolsvöllur also offers family rooms that can sleep up to five people, and two mini suites. Every room is equipped with a private bathroom, a flat screen TV, a hairdryer, coffee making facilities, and free Wi-Fi. Guests have access to a common area where two computers are available for use.

Restaurant and bar

The in-house hotel restaurant is situated on the ground floor and can accommodate up to 130 people. It can be divided into smaller units suitable for private events, meetings or conferences. The menu is centred around local, fresh ingredients, such as lamb and fish. The hotel also has a bar and a well-lit lounge, with a glass roof that creates a good sense of nature and the beautiful surroundings.

Family-friendly

The owners of Hótel Hvolsvöllur recognise the importance of family and celebrate



family holidays, offering all children 12 years old and younger a free stay with their parents. Breakfast is included in all room rates, for children as well. Furthermore, the dinner buffet is free for children dining with their parents. The owners love to receive families and are happy to make this option available to families travelling together.

Diverse activities

In addition to the popular nature sights, Hótel Hvolsvöllur is close to a number of

companies providing various activities for travellers. For instance, visitors can go on horse riding tours, visit a lovely swimming pool, play golf on a nearby course, go river rafting or sign up for a glacier walk. The Hotel is also close to well-maintained hiking trails. -JG

Hótel Hvolsvöllur
 Hlíðarveggi 7 • 860 Hvolsvöllur
 +354 487 8050
 info@hotelhvolsvollur.is
 www.hotelhvolsvollur.is



GETTING AWAY IN HVERAGERÐI

The Frost & Fire Hotel is the ideal place to explore the capital of hot springs

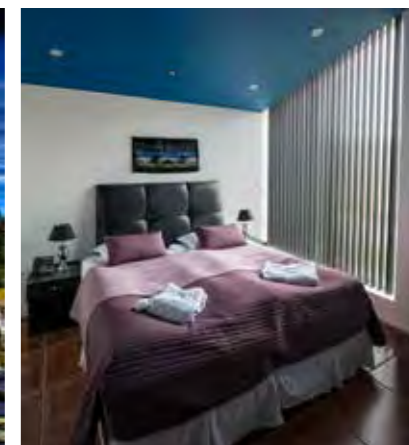
Some Icelanders affectionately and proudly refer to Hveragerði as ‘the capital of hot springs’. The charming town, just 20 minutes outside Reykjavik, gives travellers a lot of reasons stop by the region, especially as the town in on the way to the Golden Circle. Given its proximity to Reykjavik and its healing hot springs, the town is an all-year destination. After a visit to the springs, take a peek in some of the local greenhouses that populate this geothermal area. Tomatoes, cucumbers and bell peppers are popular greenhouse-grown veggies in the region.

Cosy Accommodation

Hveragerði’s Frost & Fire Hotel is a perfect place for travellers to base from when exploring the region. It is a 22-room boutique hotel nestled in the heart of the town. Each room is adorned with tasteful furniture and art from local Icelandic artists. All rooms have private shower facilities and comfortable beds

and guests have access to a spa next to the river that offers a range of treatments, along with a sauna and swimming pool. Amenities include bathrobes and slippers for each guest and a complimentary continental breakfast. The in-house Varma restaurant serves fresh, local

Icelandic food that will make your taste buds sing. The surroundings are simply beautiful and the view is breathtaking as guests can see hot springs, look across the river Varmá and the valleys Reykjadalur, Grændalur and Gufudalur.



Hveragarðurinn Geothermal Park

Tourists visit Hveragerði for two main reasons—the nature and hot springs. The hot springs beckon visitors from around the world and the central geothermal area is situated in the centre of town. It’s mesmerizing to watch as steam bubbles to the top of the water’s surface. It’s a constant reminder that Iceland sits on a hotbed of



natural, geothermal energy. Follow the path that treads between geysers and hot springs, and at the end of the walk, you can soak your feet in one of the hot pools.

Outdoor Activities

In addition to hot springs, there are a number of outdoor activities that attract visitors. There are several trails

up to Mount Hengill, which is 68km north of Hveragerði. Mount Hengill gives hikers a view of the vast volcanic landscape. It’s also possible to rent bicycles or play golf at a nine-hole golf course and there’s a lovely swimming pool downtown where locals and tourists alike gather to relax and reflect.

-JG

Frost and Fire Hveragerði
 Hverhamar • 810 Hveragerði
 +354 483 4959
 efa@frostogfuni.is
 www.frostogfuni.is



DISCOVER AN ICE-BLUE WORLD

Jökulsárlón Boat Tours tours Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon

There are few glacial lagoons existing in the world today and certainly none more awe-inspiring and accessible than the renowned Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon, situated at the head of Breiðamerkulljökull outlet glacier on the peerless Vatnajökull Glacier.

Sail Among the Icebergs

Jökulsárlón ehf has been operating boat tours on the east side of the lagoon for the last 25 years. Sail among the icebergs in a 40 minute amphibious boat tour, or take an exciting one hour Zodiac boat tour that goes further into the lagoon, getting you as close as is safe to the icebergs and the glacier itself.



A Waffle with a View

Enjoy the spectacular view over the lagoon in the small café where traditional Icelandic waffles with rhubarb jam and whipped cream are served throughout the day, as well as homemade soup with bread, sandwiches, cakes with coffee or tea which can be either taken out on the terrace or consumed inside.

The Show of Fire and Ice

The magnificent annual fireworks display over the lagoon can be described without a doubt as one of the most memorable fireworks shows on earth. The event, held annually in late August, starts at 11.30 pm, with proceeds going to Iceland's volunteer search and rescue organization, ICESAR.



Located within a few hundred metres of Route No. 1, the lagoon is actually much bigger and deeper than it appears. With an area measuring approximately 24 square km (9.2 square miles), you could easily fit the island of Heimaey (in the Westman Islands) into it with room to spare. At over 250m (820 feet) deep, four Leaning Towers of Pisa, stacked one on top of the other, would fit inside the lagoon with room to spare.

With the ebb and flow of the tides, sea water enters into the lagoon bringing with it krill, capelin, herring and salmon. Curious seals know where the food is plentiful and can often be seen bobbing along with the currents, swimming in and out between the icebergs and appearing to enjoy the attention from onlookers on the shore.

Across the road, near the delta where fresh and salt water converge, you can walk down to the water's edge to witness the rather surreal sight of baby 'bergs' beached on the shoreline. -EMV

Jökulsárlón
 Reynivellir 3 • 781 Höfn í Hornafjörðum
 +354 478 2222
 jokulsarlon@jokulsarlon.is
 www.jokulsarlon.is

HELLISHÓLAR COTTAGES, GUESTHOUSE AND HOTEL A LITTLE BIT OF ICELANDIC PARADISE



Set in one of the most idyllic locations in South Iceland, Hellishólar offers a variety of accommodation for the weary traveller who is looking for a good night's sleep in peaceful surroundings.

The sprawling Hellishólar property is located 17 minutes from Route 1, near the village of Hvolsvöllur in the middle of Fljótislíð, a picturesque farming district sheltered by three glaciers: Mýrdalsjökull, Eyjafjallajökull and Tindfjallajökull.

Cosy Cottages

Why not bed down for the night in one of Hellishólar's 25 popular, fully-furnished cottages? Each cottage can sleep from 3 to 6 people and has a small kitchen for making your own meals. If you prefer, you can also have your meals in the on-site restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

So Many Choices!

At Hellishólar there is also a guesthouse and a brand new hotel called 'Hotel Eyjafjallajökull' with 18 spacious and comfortable bedrooms, all with ensuite bathroom.

A Glorious View of Nature

The views from Hellishólar are, in a word, stunning! In winter, when the Northern Lights are visible, one has only to step outside the door and look up. The lack of light



pollution makes Hellishólar an ideal location for Northern Lights viewing.

In summer, the long days bring optimum opportunities to experience the many activities that are possible at Hellishólar—trout fishing on the lake, salmon fishing from the river that runs through the property and enjoying a round of golf on the

18 hole golf course. Hellishólar is the perfect base from which to explore South Iceland year round. See you there! -EMV

Hellishólar ehf
 361 Hvolsvöllur
 +354 487 8360
 hellisholar@hellisholar.is
 www.hellisholar.is
 www.hoteleyjafjallajokull.is



ÖLFUS' CHARMING DALAKAFFI

Dalakaffi is a lovely local café in Hveragerði

Visitors travel to Ölfusdalur for its gorgeous nature—beautiful black sand beaches, well maintained hiking trails and charming



Magnea Jónasdóttir

towns and villages. It's easy to fall in love with the remoteness and beauty of this geothermal region, just a half-hour drive from Reykjavik. Tucked away in the scenic Ölfusdalur valley, is a welcoming café that serves delicious food with friendly service.

Dalakaffi offers home-made soups, freshly baked cakes and pastries, tasty coffee, drinks, and hot cocoa,



topped with fresh whipped cream. The cosy café is a favourite among locals and tourists, and many guests stop in after a morning of hiking the local trails or horse riding, exploring the geothermal park or bathing in the naturally warm river in Reykjadalur.



Accommodating Host

Magnea Jónasdóttir is the owner of Dalakaffi and a resident of the Ölfusdalur valley, where she lives on a farm with her family. As a conservationist, Magnea knows the area well, and loves it. She opened Dalakaffi to enhance the visitors' experience of the region and to give travellers and locals a place to meet and enjoy the area. *-JG*

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STRACTA HOTEL HELLA

A New Hotel on Iceland's South Coast



Located in the peaceful village of Hella in South Iceland, Stracta Hotel is one of Iceland's newest hotels that caters for every budget. Built in 2014, the hotel gets high marks for its ability to incorporate a pleasant modern look seamlessly throughout its well thought out concept and design.

A Room for Every Budget

The hotel encompasses a wide variety of room options - from high-end deluxe suites, each with its own private hot tub and well-stocked mini-bar, right down to budget rooms with shared facilities. There are also studio apartments and spacious cottages, with simple self-catering facilities that are perfect for families with children. Whichever you choose, you can always count on comfortable beds, free access to the hotel's hot tubs, saunas and wi-fi throughout the hotel.

Northern Lights Prime Time

Stracta Hotel's prime location, situated far from the light pollution of the bigger towns, allows guests a fabulous opportunity to view the northern lights from October through April. Imagine yourself lounging in a cosy hot tub, glass of wine in hand, as the northern lights swirl through the skies



above. Should the auroras happen to make their appearance while you are sleeping, a wake-up call can be arranged so you don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime event!

Healthy Food Choices Abound

Food options and choices are varied at Stracta Hotel. The bar and bistro located on the ground floor is where you can order healthy sandwiches, salads, cakes and deserts, coffee, teas and a variety of wines and spirits. They even offer asian food. Guests will enjoy the panoramic views of the surrounding countryside from the second floor dining room where a buffet style dinner is served every evening.

When the weather is fine you can take your dinner out onto the balcony, or sit outside on the patio below, where you can enjoy the long summer nights. Planning a day out? Why not purchase a freshly made packed

lunch from the bistro to take with you on your journey.

Health, Wellness and Activities

Experience Iceland via a wide range of activities that can be arranged at the front desk. Horse riding tours, local farm visits, super jeep tours of nearby Eyjafjallajökull volcano or even an exciting helicopter tour over the most famous South Iceland sites are all possibilities. We also offer rental cars at special price for hotel guests. Fancy a massage or healing treatment? Stracta Hotel is well connected! Local therapists make themselves available to hotel guests and offer massages, meditation, Reiki and cranial-sacral massages.

Hotel Stracta welcomes you! *-EMV*

Stracta Hotels
Rangárfloötum 4 • 850 Hella
+354 531 8000
info@stractahotels.is
www.stractahotels.is

EAT FROM EIGHT TILL LATE

Eyrarbakki's Rauða Húsið adds a Café and Bistro

It's news when one of Iceland's top restaurants opens a cosy café and bistro. Throughout the summer, customers can enjoy a good breakfast and lunch – or simply coffee and cakes or muffins as the café is open from 8am until 4pm.

As a bistro, it serves salads, soups, sandwiches, burgers and pizzas from 11am. A number of vegetarian and vegan dishes are also available – including gluten-free and vegan cakes and baked items. Should

you be travelling further, there is a range of food and drinks to go.

The picturesque seaside village of Eyrarbakki was once an important trading centre in Iceland. Many of its houses were built in the early 1900s and the village maintains that turn-of-the-century charm and atmosphere. It was here that Icelandic lobster fishing was born.

Indulge in a feast of langoustines at Rauða húsið (the Red House) restaurant from 11am to 10pm in summer or 9pm the rest of the year. Arrive by noon

for a hearty bowl of langoustine soup to set you up for the rest of the day.

Serving a variety of delicious fish and meat dishes, the restaurant's cuisine is a mix of international



and Icelandic foods, all featuring local ingredients. Choose an evening of indulgence and you can savour the Catch of the Day, consisting of two different seafood dishes or try a tantalising lamb dish. Pair a bottle of fine wine with any of the menu's offerings and cap it off with one of Rauða húsið's signature desserts. –ASF

Rauða Húsið
 Büðarstigur 4 • 820 Eyrarbakki
 +354 483 3330
 raudahusid@raudahusid.is
 www.raudahusid.is



THE HOUSE AT EYRARBAKKI

The House at Eyrarbakki

Árnessýsla folk museum is located in Húsið, the House, historical home of the Danish merchants built in 1765. Today one can enjoy exhibitions about the story and culture of the region, famous piano, shawl made out of human hair and the kings pot, are among items. Húsið prides itself with warm and homelike atmosphere.

Opening hours: May 1st - September 30th daily 11.00-18.00 or by an agreement
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ÞAKGIL CANYON CAMPSITE

Þakgil is a little known highland hiker's paradise, very close to the south coast of Iceland. Þakgil (Roof Canyon) is a tiny sheltered canyon with a grassy plain floor which serves as the campsite. Access to toilets and hot showers is included. Small pine huts are also available, each with their own toilet, gas stove and refrigerator. A large natural cave serves as a dining hall, complete with a cooking grill and a fireplace. This unique setting also offers several day hike options to the nearby Mýrdalsjökull Glacier, which sits on top of the infamous Katla volcano.

Getting There Is Also an Adventure

The journey from Reykjavik begins by driving about 180 km on the main highway (the Ring Road) to the southernmost village in Iceland, Vík í Mýrdal, which is at the base of a unique black basalt beach, once voted as one of the ten most beautiful beaches in the world. The cliffs to the west are a known haven for seabirds, most notably the Puffin, the parrot of the North. You drive 5 more kilometres along the main road, and then about 15 more kilometres on a well maintained gravel road - accessible by car. The landscape is famous for its weird rock formations, and

for being one of the set locations for the Game of Thrones TV series. Þakgil is generally open during the summer from June 1 to the end of August, but some flexibility can be arranged upon request. It is usually open before the roads are opened to the highlands further inland, including the road to Landmannalaugar. –SF

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 helga@thakgil.is
 www.thakgil.is

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Lake in the Highlands with Lava in front.



REFRESHING VÍK

Halldór's Café satisfies locals and travellers alike

Guests at Halldór's Café are greeted by the scent of steaming soup and freshly baked bread as they walk through the door. Across from Vík's shoreline, with its black sand beaches, Halldór's Café emphasises the use of only quality ingredients from the locality in their cooking. Whether be it a freshly caught salmon you crave, steaks from grass-fed cattle or free range lamb served with the accompaniment of locally grown greens—you can be sure that Halldór's Café will deliver. They also offer a variety of lighter meals such as soup of the

day and light salads, and those with a bit of a sweet-tooth will not be disappointed, as the menu includes home-baked cakes and home-made ice cream from a local farm.

Originally, Halldór's Café was the general store, built in 1831 to meet all of the needs of Vík. Today, it continues to satisfy patrons with its menu, which has something for every taste, using local produce, where possible.

Halldór's Café supports artists with a rotating display of local talent featured on its walls, and serves up steaming cups of coffee and cake, ideal for meeting and



greeting old friends or new acquaintances. The café is open all year round. Summer opening hours are from 11:00am to 10:00 or 11:00pm, and winter openings are from 11:00am to 9:00pm. When travelling in the area around the beautiful Vík, be sure to stop at this charming café and get greeted with a welcoming smile and a seductive menu. -JB

Halldórscaffi
 Víkurbraut 28 • 870 Vík
 +354 847 8844
 halldorscaffi@gmail.com
 www.halldorscaffi.is

IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVING IT

Picture hunting in Iceland with the professional photographer Rafn Sig,-

Day tours / Photo and Photo Workshop tours / Winter and Summer tours

The soft light of a sunset and dawn's freshness are part of the magic that the island exerts on hunters of the moment. For photographers, Iceland is among the most magical places in the world.

If you like to live your passion for taking stunning pictures under professional guidance, you should get in touch with 'Rabbi' Rafn Sig,- one of the big names among Iceland's photographers.

Small groups, big chances

Being a professional tour operator, he knows that the best way to elicit secrets from the country is by travelling in small groups. "You have to be relaxed for landscape shooting," says Rafn, "everyone needs his time for a picture. And, after all, you want to enjoy the moment." He offers tours travelling in a comfortable Super Jeep four-wheel drive Mitsubishi, suitable for any highland and low land trip.

He doesn't conceal the fact that photo hunting is still fun for him, even after 30 years of professional work. When he was a boy, he found places of incredible beauty in the highlands. Their special magic had to be captured and a lifelong passion was born. "It's all about loving it," says Rafn.

Like-minded travelling companions

This professional photographer has published 8 books about Iceland and his pictures have been published all over the world. He likes to share his passion for travel with like-minded people. He offers customized, all year round photo trips and workshops range from a day to a fortnight long.

When you join him in his adventures, he might have a few more secrets to share.

Treasure Hunting

The winter, with only a few hours of daylight, is a particular challenge to any photographer.

Long twilights, with sunny gold pouring over the hills, and nights when the sky is full of Northern Lights that appear to be closer than anywhere else, are a real treat and best to be enjoyed in a goooooooood group.



Discover Wild Iceland

www.discoverwildiceland.com | rafn@discoverwildiceland.com
 +354 897 2108 | +354 553 7000



A DELIGHTFUL EXPERIENCE IN STOKKSEYRI

Icelandic Times checks out Fjöruborðið Restaurant

Have you strolled along the beautiful shore on Stokkseyri's beach? Have you been spellbound by the white foaming waves out by the horizon and let the silvery waves lapping at the shoreline chase and tease you? Under a blue-pink sky mirrored in the water, this surface tempts and draws, yet is the harrowing limit of our human world. It's where golden langoustines hook their claws together and dance a belly dance while mermaids serve tables amongst shrimp wrapped in seaweed, clapping shellfish and inquisitive haddock.

This is a magic moment carrying you away to an intoxicated state of well-being and lust. Your greatest desire is to lick on langoustine in garlic butter, gulp down the soup that has been lovingly pampered - little changed through the years. The soup is magical. It is suitable for



numerous occasions and happy moments on ordinary days, but Fjöruborðið takes no responsibility for consequences or stirring adventures that could result from ingesting it. It has a will of its own and, as such, it is risky for those who don't want to venture beyond the average.

This is the most famous langoustine soup in the Republic of Iceland, prepared by handsome cooks who step naked out of the ocean at Stokkseyri with their catch: the plumpest langoustines who desire only one thing - to get onto dry land. Adventurous creatures from the ocean world want to join us in just the same way as we want to join them in the depths. People have struggled against storm after storm to get here and enjoy this soup. The

desire for it can be so strong that rational thinking simply blows away with the wind. Below the black rock face at the Þrengsli mountain pass, between mountain vistas, under the stars, people rush toward the sea to sit down with our guests and party-happy ghosts, surrounded by some tickling pleasure coming from magical bowls at The Seashore, where a thousand candles cast their glow on weathered faces and loving wineskins. Matarást, the Icelandic expression for „love of food“ takes on a new meaning. Fjöruborðið Restaurant in the village of Stokkseyri is an enchanted place of delight. People have to tear themselves away from it - but that's all right.

There's only positive magic inside, tickling both stomach and soul. And now the magic has been sealed into jars for those who struggle with an irresistible craving for this great seafood delicacy from Icelandic waters, even when they're unfortunate enough to be not close to the restaurant. Enjoy! Remember to live life to the fullest, and enjoy every pleasure and suspense that a good day brings.



Fjöruborðið
Eyrarbraut 3a • 825 Stokkseyri
+354 483 1550
info@fjorubordid.is
www.fjorubordid.is




THE HOUSE THAT DISAPPEARED

The Eldheimar Volcano Museum on the Westman Islands

None of Heimaey's 5,300 inhabitants had ever expected that a volcanic eruption could make them homeless, when on 23rd January 1973, earthquakes started to shake the small island south of the Icelandic mainland. Only hours later a 2,000 metre-long crevice opened just outside the town and close to the church, pouring fountains of lava and ash over Heimaey's houses and streets.

In less than one hour all the inhabitants had been evacuated, without any chance of saving their belongings. Some people never returned to the island.

Heroes Saving a Home

Two hundred brave men stayed in the danger zone to fight the devastation, and finally succeeded in slowing down the lava flow by cooling it with seawater and thus saved the port. However, when 5 months later, the eruption came to its end, around 400 houses had been completely destroyed.

This volcanic eruption made headlines worldwide, bringing back memories of the Italian town of Pompeii, which in 73 AD, was buried under thick layers of ash and

lava from Mt. Vesuvius. Huge parts of that historic site have since been excavated—so people on the Westman Islands rolled up their sleeves and started doing the same.

'Pompeii of the North' deserves its name: 40 years after the disaster some 10 houses have been raised from the ashes, and an impressive museum tops off the excavation site, that had been open to visitors since the very first dig.

A Museum as a Mirror

Eldheimar's design is unique, rather ominous, and yet austere. It is an architectural masterpiece made of volcanic stone that perfectly mirrors the inexorability and harshness of nature. Its beating heart right in the centre of the building is Gerðisbraut No. 10, the house that had been situated on the slope of the lava-spewing volcano. Having been fully excavated, it displays life on the day of the eruption and now serves as a memorial for a lost homeland.

In Eldheimar's over 1,000m² museum, visitors are presented multimedia shows and exhibitions about the Westman Island's Eldfjall volcano that, in 1973 rose up to a



height of 220 metres out of the blue, not existing before its eruption.

It was similar to the submarine volcano that erupted in 1963 and lasted four years creating the island of Surtsey, south of Heimaey.

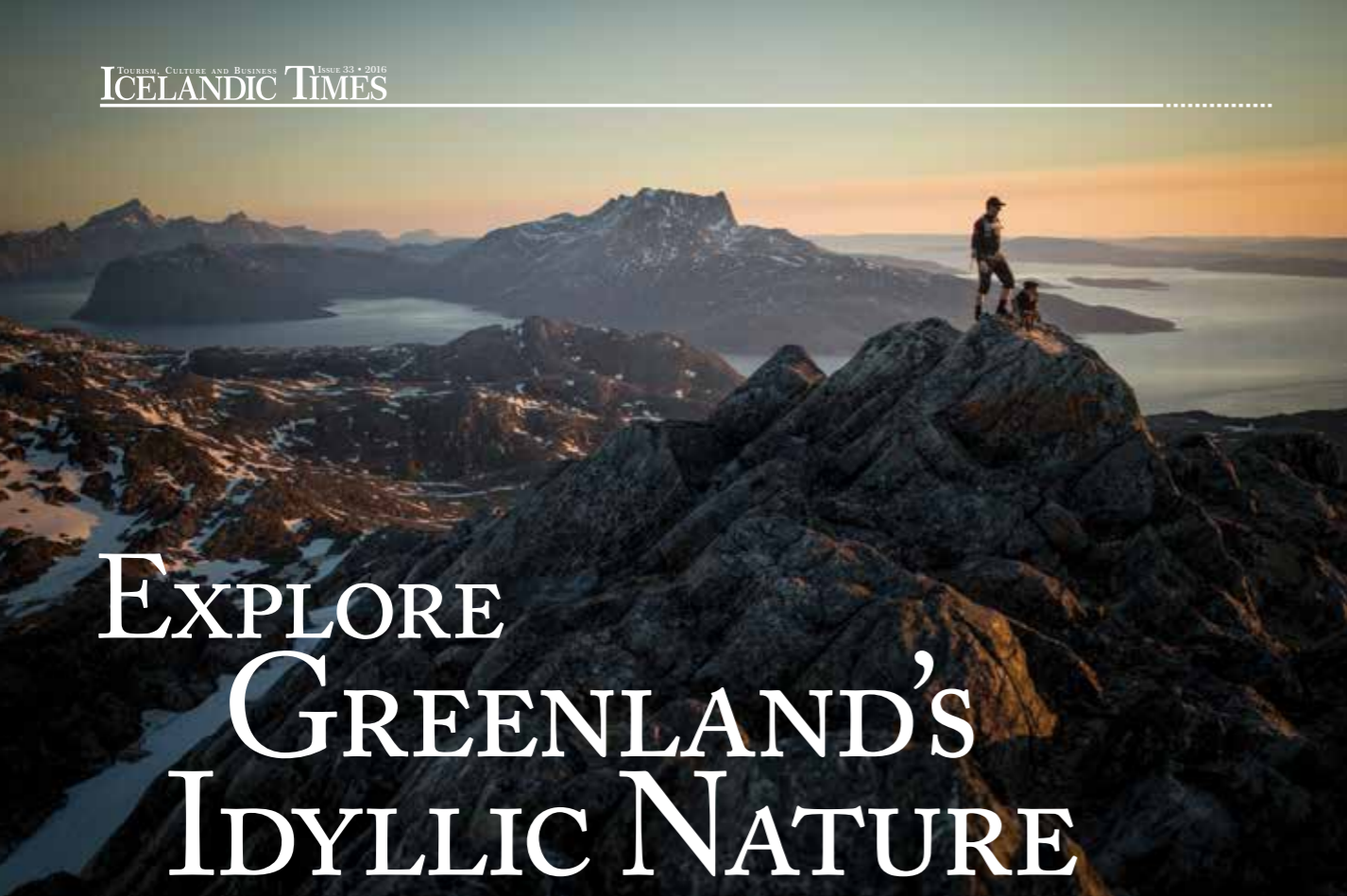
Nature protection laws protect Surtsey and only scientists are allowed to access the island for research reasons. The island is part of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage since 2008.

The Eldheimar museum is quite open in both design and guidance in the exhibition halls as well as in the café and shop. It leaves enough space for walking around and contemplating the natural disaster and its impacts on the economic and cultural life of the Westman Islands, creating respect for the determination of its fearless inhabitants, who still brave the elements today. -DT




Eldheimar
Suðurvegur • 900 Vestmannaeyjum
+354 488 2000
eldheimar@vestmannaeyjar.is
www.eldheimar.is





EXPLORE GREENLAND'S IDYLIC NATURE

Air Greenland flies to two Greenland destinations from Iceland.

Greenland is home to some of the most beautiful and breathtaking landscapes in the world. Towering glaciers lie alongside serene fjords with views of vast landscapes and panoramas of ice. The island's rich culture can be explored through charming museums and restaurants and tailored excursions ranging from relaxing sightseeing to energy-packed activity tours. Visitors may feel like they are a world away but in fact, Greenland is more accessible than ever.

Growing Interest

"We are seeing a growth in tourism," says Saki Daorana from the marketing department for Air Greenland. "We have two flights a week on both of our routes from Iceland to Nuuk and Illulissat. Tourists are travelling to Greenland from Iceland not just to see the icefjord and icebergs, but for other activities like dog-sledding and Northern Lights in winter, and the

midnight sun, whale watching and Inuit culture in the summer," says Saki. Something that makes travel to Greenland attractive is that Air Greenland's fares are not based on return tickets, so a one-way ticket is basically half the return price. This makes it easy to make a round trip—for example, Keflavik – Ilulissat – Nuuk – Sisimiut – Copenhagen.

New Ilulissat Route

The interest in flying from Iceland to Greenland is so great that Air Greenland launched a new connection from Keflavik International Airport to Ilulissat this summer. Air Greenland now has 15 flights a week to Greenland during the summer, departing from Keflavik and Copenhagen. The new summer timetable provides smooth international connections to Greenland destinations like Ilulissat, where travellers can view the Ilulissat Icefjord, which is a World Heritage Site. You can get up close and personal with huge icebergs as they pass by, drifting off to sea.

Colourful Nuuk

Air Greenland also flies to Nuuk from Iceland. Nuuk is one of the most unique, beautiful and colourful places in the world. While there is an obvious abundance of ice in Greenland, the island is also home to striking colours—lush greens and soft reds in the summer. Indeed, it's a multi-coloured metropolis situated on a spectacular slice of Greenland. The nature is unrivalled and visitors can go hiking, fishing, take boat tours into the fjord, and take boat trips among icebergs. Nuuk is a vibrant melting pot, brimming with life, offering museums displaying Greenland's contemporary art, rich history, proud cultural heritage, as well as theatres offering dance productions, cinema, and concerts.

Consider Greenland's many offerings with Air Greenland to Nuuk or Illulissat during your next holiday to Iceland. -JG



Air Greenland

Box 1012, GL-3900 Nuuk
+299 34 34 34
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WOOL OF MUSKOX AND SEALSKIN

Qiviut brings unique clothing from Greenland to the world market

Qiviut is the name of a company in Greenland with shops in Sisimiut and Nuuk. It's also the Greenlandic name of the undercoat of the musk ox.

"Our products are what makes Qiviut special," says Mia Chemnitz, the daughter of the company's owner. "We have two lines of products and we produce them all ourselves. One line is made of the wool of musk ox and the other is made from seal skin. Everything is made in Greenland by local women. We focus on quality; everything is prime quality and all our materials have to be really good."

Musk ox wool—8 times warmer than lambswool

The wool of the musk ox is considered to be one of the warmest and most luxurious fibres in the world. "The quality is absolutely amazing. The wool is eight times warmer than lamb wool, so it's one of the warmest natural fibres you can get in the world and it's almost weightless."

Qiviut mainly designs and produces accessories made with musk ox wool such as hats, gloves, wrist warmers and scarves but they also make unique pieces like large ponchos with hand-dyed colours. "So every piece in this big collection is one of a kind; it adds to the exclusivity."

Making sealskin modern again

Regarding the sealskin production, Mia says they focus on trying to make seal skin popular again. "We are trying to figure out how we can inspire young people to want to wear Greenlandic materials again."

Qiviut produces two lines in sealskin. "First is our basic line, which carries classics like sealskin slippers, headbands and a lot of different mittens. We also have modern handbags and we are currently working a lot with mixing good quality leather and sealskin in our designs."

"The second line is our attempt to make young Greenlanders fall in love with sealskin and make it modern again. So we are mixing a modern cut with memories of our traditional Greenlandic and Inuit

garments. You can see this in our jackets, vests and anorak coats."

A worldwide webshop

Qiviut has a webshop, www.qiviut.gl. "I think I have shipped products to almost 40 countries now and we send almost every day to Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany."

What about the goals for the future? "Our goal is to be the best in muskox wool production. We want to keep the production local. It is important to us that the wool is of the best possible quality and that our products are as good as they can get. We have a lot of clients who come back year after year because they know that what we do is good." -SJ



TWO AT THE TOP!



I WAS HERE and NICELAND,

two stunning photographic portrayals of Iceland in book form from the bestselling photographer Kristján Ingi Einarsson. Both books were right on target and soared immediately upon publication to the top of the list of leading photo books on Iceland.

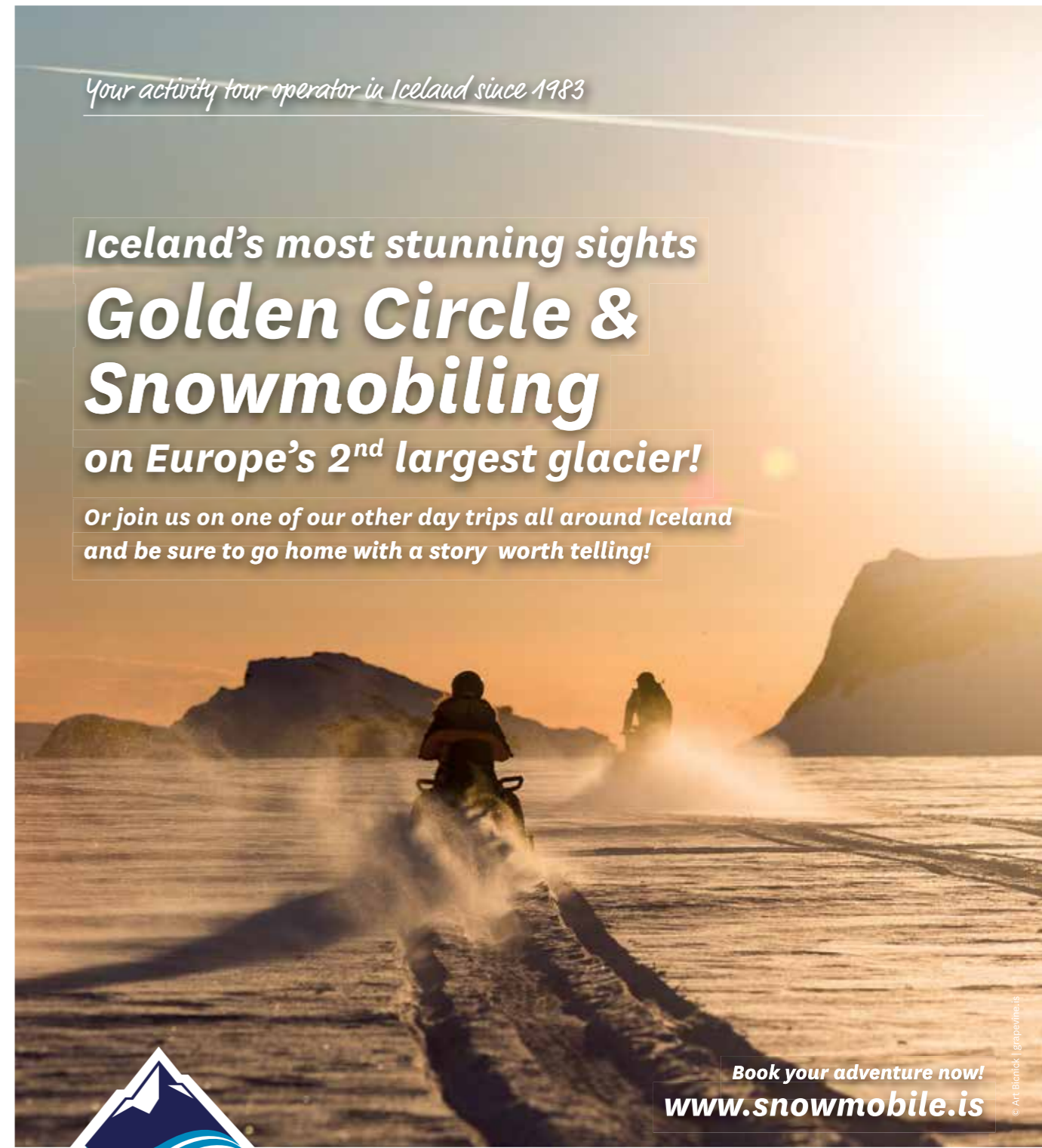
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